ATTACHMENT STYLE AND LONELINESS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY AMONG YOUNG ADULTS WHO EXPERIENCED GHOSTING AND BREADCRUMBING IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

This dissertation is submitted for the partial fulfillment for the degree of

MSc. IN APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY (SPECIALIZATION IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY)

SISTER NIVEDITA UNIVERSITY

Work under supervision of

Ms. DEBANGANA BHATTACHARYA

Assistant Professor

Department of Psychology

Sister Nivedita University

Submitted by

Ms. SREEMAYEE DAS

MSc. Student

Applied Psychology (Specialization in Clinical Psychology)

Department of Psychology

Sister Nivedita University

A Satyam Roychowdhury Initiative

SNU
SISTER NIVEDITA UNIVERSITY

Department of psychology, Sister Nivedita University

New Town, Kolkata

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "Attachment style and Loneliness: A comparative study among young adults who experienced Ghosting and Breadcrumbing in romantic relationships". submitted by Sreemayee Das, a 2nd year MSc. student in Clinical Psychology, Sister Nivedita University, is a bonafied work. which may be placed before the board of examiners for the evaluation. This is in partial fulfillment for the degree of MSc. in Applied Psychology (Specialization in Clinical Psychology). Sister Nivedita University.

This is an original study done by the candidate and has not been submitted by her before in any form for any other degree of this University or any other universities.

Date: 30/4/25

Debangana Bhattacharya 30/4/25

Work under supervision of

Ms. DEBANGANA BHATTACHARYA

Assistant Professor

Department of Psychology

Sister Nivedita University

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

"I, SREEMAYEE DAS, hereby declare that the research work titled, "Attachment style and Loneliness: A comparative study among young adults who experienced Ghosting and Breadcrumbing in romantic relationships", conducted by me has been completed with full honesty and integrity. I confirm that the work is original, and all sources of information have been appropriately acknowledged and cited. I take full responsibility for the content and findings presented in this research"

Signature: Sreemayee Das. 30/04/2025.

Name: SREEMAYEE DAS

Enrollment ID: 2322230002116

Program and Semester: MSc. in Applied Psychology (Specialization in Clinical Psychology)

Year: 2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am profoundly grateful to a number of individuals whose support and guidance have been invaluable in the completion of this research study.

I am immensely grateful to my research guide Ms. Dabangana Bhattacharya. Your expertise. insightful feedback and constant support and encouragement has been crucial to success of this study. Your dedication to my progress. from initial stages all through to the final stages of the work has been incredibly motivating. Thank you for your patience and understanding with me and you're your unwavering support.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Sister Nivedita University for providing the resources and support necessary to complete this research study. I would also like to than the others professors of our department who also gave the invaluable support throughout the research work.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the research participants. Your willingness to share your experiences and insights has been most fundamental to the realization of the study. Without your openness and cooperation. this research would not have been possible. I am deeply thankful to all of you for your time and effort that you have all invested. and for the valuable contributions you have made.

Finally. I extend my sincere gratitude to anyone. who has directly or indirectly. supported me in this endeavor. Thank you everyone for all your support. guidance and encouragement.

DATE: 30/04/2025 Sreemayee Das.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pages

1. **INTRODUCTION……8-29**
   - 1.1. **THEORIES OF RELATIONSHIP AND GHOSTING**
   - 1.2. **ATTACHMENT STYLES AND GHOSTING AND BREADCRUMBING BEHAVIOURS**
   - 1.3. **THEORY OF LONELINESS**
   - 1.4. **OTHER THEORIES ASSOCIATED WITH GHOSTING AND BREADCRUMBING BEHAVIOURS**
     - 1.4.1. **THE DARK TRIAD OF PERSONALITY**
     - 1.4.2. **THE LIGHT TRIAD OF PERSONALITY**
     - 1.4.3. **THE BIG 5 PERSONALITY TRAITS**
     - 1.4.4. **BECK'S COGNITIVE TRIAD OF DEPRESSION**
     - 1.4.5. **PERSONALITY DISORDERS**
       - 1.4.5.1. **BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDERS**
       - 1.4.5.2. **ANTISOCIAL PERSONALITY DISORDERS**
   - 1.5. **THE SHANNON-WEAVER COMMUNICATION MODEL**
   - 1.6. **SOCIAL INTERDEPENDENCE THEORY**
   - 1.7. **CONSEQUENCES OF GHOSTING AND BREADCRUMBING BEHAVIOURS**

2. **LITERATURE REVIEW…….30-40**
   - 2.1. **A CONCISE REVIEW OF KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS**
   - 2.2. **RESEARCH GAP**
   - 2.3. **RATIONALE**

3. **METHODS……41-48**
   - 3.1. **AIM OF THE STUDY**
   - 3.2. **OBJECTIVES**
   - 3.3. **HYPOTHESES**
   - 3.4. **VARIABLES UNDER STUDY**
   - 3.5. **OPERATIONAL VARIABLES OF THE STUDY**
   - 3.6. **TOOLS USED IN THE STUDY**
   - 3.7. **PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY**
   - 3.8. **INCLUSION CRITERIA**
   - 3.9. **EXCLUSION CRITERIA**
   - 3.10. **SAMPLING TECHNIQUE USED**
   - 3.11. **PROCEDURE**
   - 3.12. **STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

4. RESULTS……49-55

5. DISCUSSION…….56-60

6. CONCLUSION……..61-62

7. LIMITATIONS……..63-64

8. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPES……65-66

9. REFERRENCES……67-72

10. APPENDICES……....73-81

ABSTRACT

The emerging new online dating applications are drastically changing people's way of interacting and communicating with others, and their way of engaging in romantic relationships. The strategies of sudden and abrupt ending of relationships called Ghosting, and the act of sending out flirtatious but non-committal messages in order to lure their partner without much effort, called Breadcrumbing are increasing and are being normalized among the young adults in the modern dating world. This present study aims to explore the attachment styles (avoidant and anxious attachment styles) and loneliness among the young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in romantic relationships. A total of 75 participants were part of the sample, aged between 18 to 30 years, who have experienced ghosting or breadcrumbing in a romantic relationship. The data collection tools used in the study are Adult Attachment Questionnaire by Simpson et al., (1996), BREAD-ASR Questionnaire by Rodríguez-García et al., (2020), The Romantic Ghosting scale by Herrera-Lopez et al., (2024) and Scale of Loneliness by Williams et al., (2023). Statistical analysis conducted were Shapiro-Wilk test of normality, Independent-sample t-test and Pearson's Correlation. The findings indicated that those who reported having experiences with ghosting and breadcrumbing in relationships have exhibited anxious attachment style. However, no significant correlation was found between attachment styles and loneliness and the relationship experiences investigated in the study.

Key Words : Ghosting; Breadcrumbing; Relationships; Attachment styles; Loneliness; Young adults

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

The past few decades have seen massive advancement of technologies all around the world. These emerging new technologies such as emails, messaging applications, social networking sites and the quite recent online dating applications are drastically changing people's lifestyles, their way of interacting and communicating with others and even their way of engaging in any and all kind of relationships. The internet, as well as the development of computer applications and virtual platforms, has revolutionized the paradigm of relationships. This has changed the way one communicates and manage social, emotional and sexual relationships. It has led to new ways of interacting with others and new virtual means of social interaction. There is evidence that one relies heavily on social media and the internet for communication and connectivity. Such advancement of technologies, available to almost all allows us to connect with anyone through text messages, voice calls and sharing pictures and videos with others and so on. These changes are more seen among the young adults. Face to face interactions is gradually becoming obsolete. Advancing technologies are now seen to great affect the ways young adults are engaging in romantic relationships, communication in that relationship and even their ways of ending those relationships. In recent years, social networks and online platforms have become more prevalent in romantic relationships (Biolcati et al., 2021). Mobile applications (apps) have developed and become the most widespread method to find dates and meet romantic partners (Hobbs et al., 2017). Santos (2010) gave possible reasons of why people may choose online dating instead of the more traditional route. The reasons proposed were that online dating gives individuals more access to possible dates with more variety, a 'customizable' experience in terms of choosing potential partners based on basic interests (Santos, 2010). The online dating applications have now made it easier for people to find partners to get in romantic relationship and at the same made easier to terminate that relationship without any confrontation, without being concerned about providing any kind of explanation. These modern communications, such as social media, may, thus, be problematic in ways that are hard for our modern minds to realize (Geher & Wedberg, 2020).

Modern day communication systems can increase modes of connection but also of alienation and avoidance. The strategies of sudden and abrupt ending of relationships are called Ghosting. Ghosting may be thought of as a new way to estrange oneself from another individual. Individuals can now block someone with instant ease through the click of a button. Utilizing modern-day communication systems as a means of disappearing or withdrawing from a

romantic partner has become increasingly popular with society's technological advancements, and likely for other forms of relationships as well (LeFebvre et al., 2019).

Ghosting, as it called is a dissolution strategy in relationships where the one initiating or performing this behaviour terminates or end all kinds of communications with their potential partner without giving any explanations. Ghosting in a relationship mostly occurs through a lack of communication or complete avoidance altogether. Koessler (2018) suggested that developments in technology have influenced processes of relationship dissolution. Ghosting is an extreme form of avoidance. Ghosting is characterized by the sudden and unexpected termination of all forms of communication without a clear explanation or advanced discussion with the other person in the relationship. This can happen either suddenly or gradually and usually involves the act of "unfriending" or "unmatching" the person on social media, but it can also be done through not responding to phone calls, emails, or text messages from the other person. The emergence of ghosting behaviour, usually seen among the younger generations must be understood with the shifting of historical dynamics between direct person-to-person interaction pattens and the new mode of relating to others via new communication media. In the past, face-to-face meetings built and strengthened social ties, making each party accountable for behavior during contact. The advancement with the telegraph and telephone subsequently permitted communication during physical separations, thus maintaining relationships over a distance but reducing closeness. Radio and television centralized one-way broadcasts into homes, creating fantasy relationships that, at times, felt real. The New York Times posted an article on 5th of February, 2025 where its mentioned Ghosting or cutting off contact without explanation has become such a scourge for modern daters that Esther Perel, a couples therapist calls it a "manifestation of the decline of empathy in our society ". Ghosters have acquired a reputation of selfish villains tossing good relationships away (The New York Times, 2025)

Ghosting has now become a topic of psychological interest because as occurs frequently among the young adults, and can cause significant mental distress, about which little has been researched. Jennice Vilhauer, on the Psychology Today website stated that mental health professionals view ghosting as a form of emotional cruelty, leaving ghostees (those who have been ghosted by others) ignorant and in distress as to why the breakup occurred and leaving them powerless to respond. Koessler et al., (2018) found that young adults who initiated (ghoster) the termination process experienced less distress than those on the receiving end (ghostee). Another study conducted by Manning et al., (2019) revealed that individuals viewed

the impact of ghosting differently depending on whether they were a ghoster or a ghostee. The same individuals expressed their belief of having been ghosted as unjustifiable, but admitted that ghosting was, nevertheless, a practical and simple way of ending a relationship. Ghosting thus takes place without the ghosted partner immediately knowing what has happened, and being left to manage and understand what the partner's lack of communication means (Freedman et al., 2019) and without being able to obtain closure (LeFebvre et al., 2019). The term Ghosting originally posted in 2006 in Urban dictionary, has gained prominent attention in the recent times, and was chosen as one of the top words in 2015 by the Collins English Dictionary (The Telegraph, 2015). Then in 2016, a new relationships trend in the dating scene emerged: "breadcrumbing" (The New York Times, 2016). The term "breadcrumbing" originates from the noun "breadcrumbs", which means "very small pieces of dried bread, especially used in cooking" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019).

Breadcrumbing, also called as Hansel and Grettelling, this behaviour has gained attention in the recent media due to its relevance to contemporary dating dynamics. It has been the subject of discussion in several articles, blogs, and television shows, as it has now become a common experience that many people have gone through in modern relationships. Thus, Breadcrumbing can be seen as "the act of sending out flirtatious but non-committal messages

(breadcrumbs), in order to lure their partner without expending much effort". It can also be defined as the way of leading someone by contacting them intermittently to keep the other person interested. It involves keeping the other person's expectation going about the possible relationship while the person performing the behaviour has no actual intention of dating. It is considered a negative dating behaviour. The "breadcrumber" shows just enough interest to the other person in the relationship to keep him/her stay hooked or involved in the relationship, with the intention of only using the relationship to gain superficial connection or attention from the other person. The breadcrumber never wants to leave the other person in the relationship but will never be meaningfully involved with the said person. The Economic Times posted an article on February, 2025 stating that "Breadcrumbing is when someone gives you just enough attention - flirty texts, sporadic likes, or occasional check-ins to keep you interested without committing. It creates false hope, leaving the other person emotionally invested in a relationship that may never materialize."

Ghosting and Breadcrumbing behaviours are increasing and are being normalized among the young adults. Ghosting defined by the sudden cut off of all contact with someone. Val Walker,

a rehabilitation consultant and author stated in the article published on May, 2024 for Psychology Today that in the world of dating, there may have been a temporary rise in behaviours like ghosting during the first few months of pandemic. She further mentioned that a recent study indicated that those who have been ghosted are likely to initiate ghosting on someone. Along with ghosting, other noncommittal behaviours have also become common for the modern dating world. One of which is called breadcrumbing. Breadcrumbing is when someone appears to engage with you by leaving a trail of breadcrumbs (little tidbits) but never really commits to anything solid or specific (sharing a decent slice of their loaf). The pattern is often called "stringing someone along" or "keeping options open." (Val Walker, Psychology Today, 2024).

The online dating world has now opened a whole new door of opportunities for those looking for any kinds of relationships. With just a click, tap or swipe away and people get the chance of meeting others whom they consider a potential match. These opportunities have can have a negative side too. Ghosting and Breadcrumbing are modern phenomena that comes to that negative side. These trends may be considered cold and inconsiderate but at times can be due to the individuals being unsure of their feelings or suffering from commitment issues. An article published in Hans India on February, 2025 stated that everyone feels conflicted about certain connections. But communicating with honesty can help clear any confusion, that 22% of online daters revealed that they all have ghosted someone at some point in their life because they did not know how to let them down gently. Those who had previously experienced ghosting believed that ghosting romantic partners was more prevalent compared to those without any such experiences. People generally felt embarrassed or inadequate after being ghosted by a romantic partner. Freedman and Dainer-Best (2020) examined whether anxiety, general distress, depression, self-esteem, anhedonia, and other depressive symptoms are associated with willingness to ghost. They hypothesized that these traits would lead to a higher likelihood of ghosting because they would cause more difficulty engaging with rejection but none of these traits were significant with ghosting behaviour.

There are various risks of ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviours. These behaviours, if lasts long enough can cause anxiety, guilt and can be emotionally exhausting to the victims of such behaviours. Breakups in a relation are common but, in some cases, can result in extreme distress for both adult and adolescents (Davis et al., 2003). Loss of intimacy, including relationship dissolution, has been identified as being a major life event (Kendler et al., 2003) which can lead to intrusive thoughts and grief symptoms (Field, 2011; Field et al., 2009). Other negative

effects include guilt, anger, and sorrow (Sprecher et al.,1998), as well as an increase in psychological distress and decline in life-satisfaction (Rhoades et al., 2011). The grief experience is stronger if the relationship was perceived as an intimate one, whether physically or emotionally (Robak & Weitzman, 1998). Ghosting robs the opportunity of a healthy conversation, gain clarity of the situation and seek closure if in case the quality of the relationship is declining, instead it is the abrupt ending of the relation with any prior explanation. Being ghosted can trigger feelings of self-doubt, those who are ghosted often find themselves to in anger and sorrow, difficulty in trusting others and they often fear to get into new relationships. Loss of intimacy, feelings of abandonment due to unhealthy communication pattern, stress and several unresolved can result in one ghosting his or her partner. Short-term effects of ghosting include confusion about what happened, due to the lack of answers or clarity, rumination i.e., repeatedly thinking about the relationship and interactions due to the lack of closure where the one who is ghosted keeps wondering where did thing go wrong and even at times can doubt themselves and even blaming oneself for doing something "wrong" that caused the ghosting along with feelings of rejection and not being good enough for the other person. Long-term effects of ghosting involves struggles with self-esteem and self-worth, thinking they are not good enough and fear to get into any future relationships, mistrust of others, which can impact future relationships, sadness and distress related to relationships in general, loneliness, which can contribute to depressive symptoms believing you are unlovable, and that he or she does not deserve any love, and feels better off by being alone, the feelings of uncertainty about future comes with lower life satisfaction. Breadcrumbing may generate more emotional tension than ghosting and make recovery more difficult due to its ongoing nature (Navarro et al., 2020). While ghosting seems like a "quick death" of a relationship, breadcrumbing is a "slow death" and is arguably more difficult to deal with due to its nature of prolonged uncertainty about the relationship, false hope leading to emotional investment and is may seem like a waste of time. The inconsistent nature of breadcrumbing can make it difficult for one to move on, being strung along in a drawn-out way with no means to an end, but causing one to believe that it might work at some point is more difficult and, in a way, seems crueler than stopping it all at once.

1.1. Theories of relationship and Ghosting:

In 2018, researchers (Freedman et al., 2018; Koessler, 2018) explored ghosting behaviour and the factors associated with it. Freedman et al. (2018) found an association between beliefs in destiny and growth and ghosting behaviours i.e., those who believe in the notion of 'soulmates'

will be more likely to ghost their partner and find ghosting to be an appropriate method to terminate short and long-term relationships in order to find their "soulmates".

Freedman et al., (2019) found connections between Implicit theories of relationships and ghosting beliefs. Participants with strong destiny beliefs, i.e., having a fixed mindset that relationships are either going to work or not, felt more positively about ghosting, had strong intentions of ghosting, and were more likely to have used ghosting in the past. Alternatively, participants with strong growth beliefs, who have the idea that individuals and relationships grow over time, felt more negatively about ghosting. Implicit theories of relationships seem to be a factor in how individuals view and engage in ghosting, especially regarding destiny beliefs. Individuals have different beliefs about what makes for a good relationship. These beliefs or implicit theories determine, in part, one's goals and motivations in relationships (Knee & Patrick, 2001). Implicit theories of relationships (ITRs) are defined or characterized by a belief in romantic destiny and a belief in relationship growth. Destiny belief is defined as the belief that potential relationship partners are either compatible or they are not.

Koessler (2018) suggested that developments in technology may have a direct influence to the processes of relationship dissolution, as seen by the difference between ghosting and direct (confrontational) conversation strategies used to terminate a relationship. Everyone has different ways to cope with the dissolution of a romantic relationship. When the event is perceived stressful, it can cause emotional turmoil. This turmoil should be dealt with in order manage one's state of mind, emotional and physical well-being (Caver et al., 1989). Hence it is important to understand how one may cope when ghosted. When relationships are romantic in nature, it is important to understand the romantic attachment styles of individuals with their current or ex-partner; because romantic attachment is related to how individuals cope upon relationship dissolution (Hatfield & Rapson, 1995; Jerome & Liss, 2005). Furthermore, when examining romantic attachment styles (anxious and avoidant attachments), research (Feeney & Noller, 1992) found that anxiously attached individuals can become upset and surprised by the termination of their romantic relationship, whereas individuals with avoidant attachment are more relieved upon realizing the dissolution of their romantic relationship.

People navigate their relationships with varying goals and concerns. Individuals approach the broader social landscape with different motivational preferences and approaches. Two theoretical frameworks - self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) and regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997). The Self-discrepancy theory states the relations between and among different

types of self-beliefs or self-state representations that results in emotional vulnerabilities rather than producing any particular content or nature of the actual self or of any other individual self-belief. To distinguish among different types of self-state representations, Self-discrepancy theory proposes two psychological parameters: the domains of the self and the standpoints on the self. Inconsistencies between these self-states can result in emotional discomforts such as fear, threat or anger. Self-discrepancy is the gap between two of these self-representations that leads to negative emotions. Individuals suffering from such inconsistencies of their selves are unable to form a secure relationship and may engage in harmful behaviours of ghosting as their vulnerabilities keep them from taking any responsibilities of a healthy relationship. The Regulatory focus theory is a psychological concept which states that goal-directed behavior operates differently for individuals high in promotion focus compared to individuals high in prevention focus (Higgins, 1997). A promotion focus refers to a motivational strategy that is approach oriented and concerned with positive outcomes such as accomplishments, gains, and aspirations. A prevention focus refers to a motivational strategy that is avoidance oriented and concerned with safety, duties, and avoiding negative outcomes. For prevention-focused individuals, goals are seen as obligations, rather than desired standards. Those with promotion focus strategy are less likely to engage in behaviours such as ghosting and breadcrumbing, whereas, those high in prevention focus are more concerned about avoiding any negative emotions which can result from breaking up a relationship face to face, hence they are more likely to engage in behaviours such as ghosting which is a relationship dissolution strategy and involves avoiding any face-to-face conversation or explaining.

1.2. Attachment styles and Ghosting and Breadcrumbing behaviours:

Adult romantic attachment styles is one of the factors behind ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviours (Collins & Read, 1990) have two dimensions; Avoidant and Anxious (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998). Attachment patterns can be separated into four categories: Secure, Preoccupied, Dismissing-avoidant, and Fearful avoidant. Secure attachment is characterized by a positive model of self and other (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998) - they are more comfortable with intimacy in a close relationship. Preoccupied attachment is characterized by a negative model of self and a positive model of other. Preoccupied individuals are more likely to anxiously seek acceptance and validation from others, with the belief that they can acquire safety or security. Dismissing attachment is characterized by a positive model of self and a negative model of other. Dismissing individuals tend to avoid emotional intimacy due to negative preconception; but they also maintain sense of worth by defensively denying the value

of close relationships. Fearful attachment is characterized by a negative model of self and other. These individuals are more highly dependent on other's acceptance and affirmation; however, they tend to avoid intimacy to avert the pain of loss and rejection due to their negative expectation.

Bowlby's attachment theory posits that early childhood attachment experiences shape how adults approach their close relationships. Consequently, these experiences lead to the development of typical mental frameworks or internal working models in the child. The study published in the Journal of Psychology (2016), aimed to examine how young individuals with varying attachment styles view the benefits and drawbacks of spending substantial time with their partner, as well as to assess whether their beliefs align with the internal working models linked to their attachment style. The findings indicated that young people with different attachment styles have varying beliefs about the outcomes resulting from engaging in a specific behavior in romantic relationships. A secure and preoccupied individuals views the behavioral outcomes that lead to greater intimacy or closeness in their relationships, more favorably than those who are avoidant, whereas dismissing individuals had a more negative view of outcomes had a perceived loss of independence.

Certain parent-child interactions in childhood, can result in adult attachment insecurity. Parent-Child Interaction is defined as the face-to-face engagement between parents and children, where social skills are learned, practiced, and improved, influencing various social outcomes such as aggression, achievement, and moral development. The quality of interaction, characterized by warmth and responsiveness, plays a crucial role in shaping children's social competence and behavior (Melinda et al., 2015). those who grow up with a healthy parent-child interaction develops a secure attachment style and well-developed social skills and most likely have a less chance of engaging in behaviours such as ghosting or breadcrumbing.

Wei and colleagues (2004) argued that attachment is better conceptualized as two continuous dimensions, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Cameron et al., 2012). A study done by Feeney & Noller (1992) found that anxiously attached individuals are very upset and surprised by the termination of their romantic relationship, whereas attachment avoidant individuals are relieved at the news of their relationship dissolution. Sheppard (2012) suggested that avoidantly attached individuals underestimate the duration of their affective reactions (i.e. emotional consequence) as perhaps they think they are less distressed from it. Krahé and colleagues (2015) found that in the presence of their partners, highly attachment avoidant

women reported higher pain ratings and showed higher amplitude in certain brain regions in response to the pain stimuli.

A psychological understanding of ghosting involves examining interpersonal dynamics through diverse lenses. Attachment theory is one such perspective, as attachment anxiety is positively associated with a need for constant validation, while an important risk for attachment avoidance is a history of unexplained intimacy withdrawal. Both attachment anxiety and avoidance are theorized as driving ghosting behaviors, as a means of upholding a relatively fragile self-image. There is a controversial statement that men are prone to avoidant attachment formation and women prefer anxious attachment formation, but there is some supportive evidence to corroborate these findings. For example, Simpson et al., reported that men scored higher on the dismissing style, and women scored higher on the preoccupied style. On the other hand, it was found that men do not necessarily have a more dismissive form of attachment than women across all cultures; it may depend on sociocultural indicators. Regarding age differences. It was also found that younger adults experience anxious attachment more frequently than older adults. Similarly, attachment anxiety was more commonly reported by younger adults compared to middle aged and older adults, while attachment avoidance was less commonly reported by younger adults compared to the middle-aged and older adults.

1.3. Theory of Loneliness:

Loneliness has always been part of human existence, but it has a relatively short history as a subject of psychological investigation. Psychiatrist John Bowlby during the second half of the 20th century, developed attachment theory which emphasizes the importance of a strong emotional bond between the infant and the caregiver; it stands as a forerunner to contemporary theories of loneliness. From that perspective, loneliness occurs when children with insecure attachment patterns behave in ways that result in their being rejected by their peers. Those rejections hinder the path of their development of social skills and increase their distrust of other people, thereby fostering ongoing loneliness.

Attachment theory was the foundation for an influential psychological theory of loneliness developed by the sociologist Robert S. Weiss (1973). Weiss who identified six social needs that, if not met, can contribute to feelings of loneliness. Those needs are attachment, social integration, nurturance, reassurance of worth, sense of reliable alliance, and guidance in stressful situations. Weiss also mentioned that friendships complement but do not substitute for a close, intimate relationship with a partner in staving off loneliness. Another theoretical

perspective, the behavioral approach, holds that loneliness is characterized by personality traits that are associated with, and possibly contribute to, harmful patterns of interpersonal interaction. For instance, loneliness is correlated with social anxiety, social inhibition (shyness), sadness, hostility, distrust, and low self-esteem, characteristics that hamper one's ability to interact in skillful and rewarding ways. Indeed, lonely individuals have been shown to have difficulty forming and maintaining meaningful relationships. They are also less likely to share information about themselves with their peers, and that helps to explain why they report a lack of intimacy with close friends. The cognitive approach to loneliness is based on the fact that loneliness is characterized by distinct differences in perceptions and attributions. Lonely individuals tend to have a pessimistic general outlook: they are more negative than are individuals who are not lonely about the people, events, and circumstances in their lives, and they tend to blame themselves for not being able to achieve satisfactory social relationships. In addition, the cognitive approach largely takes account of the attachment and behavioral perspectives by explaining how one faces failure to meet the need for attachment, social integration, nurturance, and other social needs results in perceived relationship discrepancies that are experienced as loneliness, and how loneliness is perpetuated by way of a self-fulfilling prophecy in which poor social skills result in unsatisfactory personal relationships that in turn result in negative self-attributions that lead to further social isolation and relationship dissatisfaction. Loneliness is more seen among the those are victims of ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviour.

1.4. Other theories associated with Ghosting and Breadcrumbing behaviours:

There have been studies about the Dark Triad of personality which includes Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy (Jonason & Webster, 2010), the Light Triad of personality, including Kantianism, humanism, and faith in humanity (Kaufman et al., 2019), life history strategy or the tendency to approach life as fast or slow (Giosan, 2006), the Big Five Personality Traits which includes extraversion, emotional stability, openminded-ness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Soto & John, 2017), non-clinical borderline personality tendencies (Zanarini et al., 2003), perceived social support (Zimet et al., 1988), non-clinical depressive tendencies (Zung, 1965), life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985), and socio-sexuality (Penke & Asendorpf, 2008). These variables address the social and emotional factors that are based on past work (Geher et al., 2019), and their association with ghosting behaviour. Individuals who had more ghosting-related experiences would show more adverse and negative social, emotional, and psychological functioning compared to those who have had fewer such

experiences. This broad prediction is based very closely on the findings of Geher et al. (2019), which found that estrangements have adverse effect on the psychological attributes of ghosting behaviour.

1.4.1. The Dark Triad of Personality:

The Dark Triad of personality is a cluster of personality traits comprising narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Trait narcissism reflects a strong sense of entitlement and a need for attention, admiration, and approval (Miller et al., 2011). There are two subtypes of narcissism, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Grandiose narcissism is the belief of one's superiority and greatness (Besser & Priel, 2010), whereas vulnerable narcissism is characterized by feelings of inadequacy, incompetence and a need for social approval (March et al., 2020). Machiavellianism is described as the pursuit of one's goals at any cost, and is associated with the desire to manipulate others (Christie & Geis, 2013). It is comprised of two dimensions; views and tactics (Monaghan et al., 2020). Whereas Machiavellianism views describe the appraisal of humanity as untrustworthy and cheating in nature (Monaghan et al., 2020). Machiavellianism tactics encompasses the cognitive and behavioural aspects of a person who is willing to achieve their goal at any cost (Monaghan et al., 2020). Psychopathy encompasses traits such as aggression, impulsivity, and low empathy (Muris et al., 2017). Psychopathy includes two dimensions, primary and secondary psychopathy. Primary psychopathy incorporates callousness, superficial charm, and manipulation whereas, secondary psychopathy comprises impulsivity, boredom, and hostility (Newman et al., 2005). Narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism are all associated with an increased propensity to lie (Forsyth et al., 2021), a selfish and exploitative approach to relationships (Jonason et al., 2021), and a willingness to manipulate others (Waddell et al., 2020). There is evidence from researches that those with Dark Triad traits are more likely to engage in antisocial dating behaviours (Duncan & March, 2019; Jonason et al., 2021). Such examples of behaviour include ghosting, where one person silences communication with a romantic interest or partner and indirectly terminates the relationship (Jonason et al., 2021). Evidence from researches suggest higher levels of Dark Triad traits are related to greater acceptability of ghosting as a relationship termination strategy (Jonason et al., 2021). Another antisocial dating behaviour is breadcrumbing. Breadcrumbing is a manipulative behaviour defined as leading on a romantic partner or interest through intermittently engaging in flirtatious contact without any intention of progressing the relationship (Navarro et al., 2020). Both ghosting and breadcrumbing are associated with reduced life satisfaction and happiness

for those who experience it (Navarro et al., 2020). Persons with dark triad traits (i.e., psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism) tend to avoid the difficult conversations inevitably associated with ending a relationship. These individuals characteristically lack empathy with others and avoid pain for themselves whenever possible. It has been found that the grandiosity and arrogance of many narcissists make them unwilling to admit errors or face conflict. Machiavellian traits include duplicity. Such individuals often carry out multiple relationships at the same time, which may, from time to time, require dropping the one(s) that matter least. Psychopathy is characterized by dispositional callousness, which predisposes individuals to ghosting. A study by Jonason et al. (2021) showed that men (more so than women) with dark triad traits find ghosting acceptable in short-term (as opposed to long-term) relationships. Moreover, men with Machiavellian and psychopathic traits (but not those with narcissistic traits) report having ghosted people in the past and considering this form of ending relationships acceptable. Several studies have addressed this difference by speculating that narcissists are capable of empathy, whereas psychopaths and Machiavellians are not. LeFebvre et al., (2019) suggested that ghosting is commonly used for terminating casual rather than serious relationships but does not comment on the association with dark triad traits. Jonason et al. concluded that ghosting depends on one's concept of the seriousness of the relationship; the more a person values the relationship, the less likely they are to resort to ghosting when contemplating a breakup.

1.4.2. The Light Triad of Personality:

The Light Triad consists of Kantianism, humanism, and faith in humanity. People with these traits are said to be primarily motivated by intimacy and self-transcendent values. The light triad was devised in contrast to the dark triad of personality, the traits associated with narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. The people with these traits do not act upon such behaviours of ghosting and breadcrumbing but rather look for a strong bond in relationship. Again, if they ever come across experiences of ghosting and breadcrumbing, can easily cope with its aftermath and look towards healthy relationships.

1.4.3. The Big 5 Personality Traits:

Personality makes up who we are, it's why some people thrive in social settings while others prefer solitude. Many contemporary personality psychologists believe that there are five basic dimensions of personality, often referred to as the "Big 5" personality traits. The Big 5 personality traits, aka the five-factor model, are extraversion (also spelled extroversion),

agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Extraversion is sociability, agreeableness is kindness, openness is creativity and intrigue, conscientiousness is thoughtfulness, and neuroticism often involves sadness or emotional instability. Openness (also referred to as openness to experience) emphasizes imagination and insight the most out of all five personality traits. People who are high in openness tend to have a broad range of interests. They are curious about the world and other people and are eager to learn new things and enjoy new experiences. Conscientiousness is defined by high levels of thoughtfulness, good impulse control, and goal-directed behaviors. Highly conscientious people tend to be organized and mindful of details. They plan ahead, consider how their behavior affects others, and are conscious of deadlines. Extraversion (or extroversion) is a personality trait characterized by excitability, sociability, talkativeness, assertiveness, and high amounts of emotional expressiveness. People high in extraversion are outgoing and tend to gain energy in social situations. Being around others helps them feel energized and excited. This personality trait includes attributes such as trust, altruism, kindness, affection, and other prosocial behaviors. People who are high in agreeableness tend to be more cooperative while those low in this personality trait tend to be more competitive and sometimes even manipulative. Neuroticism is a personality trait characterized by sadness, moodiness, and emotional instability. This trait is generally defined as a negative personality trait that can have detrimental effects on a person's life and well-being. Individuals who are high in neuroticism tend to experience mood swings, anxiety, irritability, and sadness. People who are high on openness are less prone to engage in ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviour. People low on extraversion usually prefer solitude and if maintaining a relationship feels too exhausting, can ghost their partners or even continue sending sporadic and uncertain messages without getting involved in the relationship. People low on agreeableness are prone to ghosting or breadcrumbing behaviour, and takes little interest about others feelings or problems and is usually ignorant of others. People high on neuroticism if experiences being ghosted or breadcrumbed in a relation can become anxious, self-doubting and with feelings of helplessness; again, people low on neuroticism can better cope with such experiences.

1.4.4 Beck’s Cognitive Triad of Depression:

Cognitive Triad of Depression given by Aaron Beck states negative views about self where the person may think he or she is not a good human being, a good for nothing, a bad and worthless; these are negative thoughts about oneself, also known as feelings of worthlessness; negative views about the environment where the person may have negative views about the environment

believing the outside world is very harsh, nobody can help him or; there is only hostility and the world is being cruel to him or her, known as feelings of helplessness; and the negative views about the future where the person may feel the future holds nothing, nothing good will happen, it is all dark, there is no hope in the future for me, this is known as feelings of hopelessness. People who were ghosted in their relationships, with no closure or clarity often find themselves doubting about future relationships and whether they are worth pursuing, believing they do not deserve anything good and find it difficult to trust anyone enough to get into the relationship.

1.4.5. Personality Disorders :

A personality disorder is a mental health condition that involves long-lasting, all-encompassing, disruptive patterns of thinking, behavior, mood and relating to others. These patterns cause a person significant distress and/or impair their ability to function in daily life situations. DSM-5-TR groups the 10 types of personality disorders into 3 clusters (A, B, and C), based on similar characteristics. However, the clinical usefulness of these clusters has not been established. Cluster B personality disorders affect a person's emotions and behaviors, leading to actions that others tend to consider dramatic, overly emotional, or erratic. These disorders can lead to significant distress and, in many cases, harmful coping strategies. People with cluster B disorders typically have trouble regulating their emotions and maintaining stable relationships. These disorders include Antisocial Personality Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder, Histrionic and Narcissistic Personality disorders

1.4.5.1. Borderline Personality Disorder:

Individuals with Borderline personality disorder often fear rejection and abandonment, sometimes resulting in pre-emptive actions like ghosting. They may abruptly cut off communication, believing that it is better to leave first than to experience the pain of being left. Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is a mental health condition characterized by instability in mood, self-image, and interpersonal relationships, as well as marked impulsivity. Fear of abandonment and chronic feelings of emptiness further compound the complexity of this disorder. Individuals with BPD often experience intense and rapidly shifting emotions, have difficulty regulating their emotions, and engage in impulsive behavior (such as ghosting), including recurrent self-harm and suicidality. (Chapman et al., 2024). The individuals have difficulty in managing emotions. Ghosting is an easier route to avoid confrontation or emotional discomfort.

1.4.5.2. Antisocial Personality Disorder:

Antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) shows signs of reckless behavior in social context. Presence of any form of personality disorders such as antisocial personality disorder (ASPD) are responsible for negatively influencing social life and personal relationships (Bertolín-guillén, 2023). Breadcrumbing is a cruel act of leaving the other person in the relationship feeling emotionally drained. The perpetrator offers only minimum affection and never promises real commitment in the relationship. This not only ruins the emotional aspect of the victim but also has a long-lasting negative consequence over the psyche of the victim (Rhee et al., 2021). The important signs of antisocial personality disorder involve manipulation and lack of empathy associated with breadcrumbing behaviours. Being breadcrumbed in a relationship often makes the person emotionally unavailable for any possible future relationships (Mukherjee, 2024). In the digital era, occurrence of flirtation in a relationship without any follow up message is responsible for terminating relationships at an early stage. Technology generated communication is responsible for creating fake connections (Daraj et al., 2023). They avoid any commitment to relationship and try to exert a control over the other person. Adolescents who fall victim to breadcrumbing suffers from low self-esteem, and are responsible for sudden disengagement in future relationships. Continuation of such habits lead to unexplained withdrawal from future intimate relationships.

1.5. The Shannon-Weaver communication Model:

Ghosting is a topic of psychological interest because it occurs frequently, can cause mental distress, and has been little researched. The Shannon–Weaver communication model explored the phenomenon of Ghosting. In 1948, Shannon, an American mathematician, electronic engineer and Weaver an American scientist jointly wrote an article in “Bell System Technical Journal” called “A Mathematical Theory of Communication” and also called as “Shannon-Weaver model of communication”. This model is specially designed to develop the effective communication between sender and receiver. They also found factors affecting the communication process called “Noise”. At first the model was developed to improve the technical communication. Later became widely popular in the field of Communication. Ghosting is the abrupt ending of communication with the other person in the relationship without giving any prior explanation or any form of clarity about the termination. The model deals with various concepts like information source, transmitter, noise, channel, message, receiver, channel, information destination, encode and decode. Communication is a process by

which we can understand and be understood by others. Effective communication is characterized by understanding, can cause pleasure, influence attitudes, improve good social relations, and ultimately lead to an action (Suprapto, 2017). These effective communication patterns when disrupted can result in behaviours such as ghosting which results in complete lack of communication and breadcrumbing which involves unhealthy communication patterns in a relationship.

1.6. Social Interdependence Theory:

Social interdependence theory provides another perspective. Social Interdependence Theory is a conceptual framework that defines how people interact depending with each other base on the social structure in which they are embedded (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). This theory draws from the early work by Deutsch (1949), who was the first to differentiate cooperation from competition focusing on the social structure that organizes interaction between two or more people, that is, social interdependence. Cooperation occurs when both the persons' goals are positively interdependent and aligned, and the success of one person requires or implies the success of the other. This can involve negotiation to achieve a common goal and alignment of different opinions and interests through compromising with each other (Butera & Buchs, 2019). Competition occurs when both the persons' goals are negatively interdependent or aligned, and the success of one requires or implies the failure of the other. It should be noted that the terms cooperation and collaboration are sometimes differentiated (Davidson, 1994; Dillenbourg, 1999) and sometimes merged (Topping, 1992), but most of the time they are used interchangeably. Phenomenon like ghosting and breadcrumbing usually involve a competition where both the person involved want the opposite of one another, having being different goals.

A study conducted by Timmermans et al., (2020) revealed three themes when reviewing ghostees' perspectives on reasons for being ghosted. Approximately 59% blamed the ghoster, attributing his/her actions to personality flaws such as cowardice or unresolved commitment issues or other relationship breakdowns, such as loss of romantic interest or involvement in a new relationship. Another 37% of the participants placed the blame on themselves and were convinced that they had said or done something wrong or were simply unworthy of the relationship. A third (overlapping) group of 37% blamed dating apps that facilitated ghosting. The same study also examined the reasons given by ghosters and identified five major themes. Three were the same as those of ghostees. In addition, some felt that there was no obligation to

discuss breaks beforehand, while others believed (or said they believed) that no explanation was less painful for the ghostee than the trauma of explanatory discussions.

Individuals may choose to ghost for various reasons. Initiators (those who ghost others) have mentioned about losing attraction to the non-initiators (those who are ghosted) in the relations. (LeFebvre et al., 2019), often reporting about the unfavorable behaviours of the non-initiator (Timmermans et al., 2020), and the short duration of the relationship (LeFebvre et al., 2019a) as reasons for them ghosting their partners. They often identified their reason for ghosting as more self-related, either because of convenience (Thomas & Dubar, 2021), or their disinterest in their partners (Koessler et al., 2019), and for avoidance of confrontation or conflict (Thomas & Dubar, 2021), safety their and security concerns in confronting the non-initiator face-to-face (LeFebvre et al., 2019; Thomas & Dubar, 2021; Timmermans et al., 2020), or not being emotionally ready to start a relationship, or even because ghosting prevented the non-initiator from changing the initiator's mind or manipulating them back into the relationship (Timmermans et al., 2020). In some cases, it resulted, in those who ghosted to feel that they do not owe the other person anything, denying any responsibility, particularly when ghosting someone from mobile dating sites and apps (Timmermans et al., 2020).

1.7. Consequences of Ghosting and Breadcrumbing behaviours:

The consequences of ghosting extend beyond psychology and can affect physiological processes. Cooper et al. and Fisher et al. (2019) reviewed fMRI studies depicting activated pain networks coinciding with interpersonal rejection. Van der Molen et al., (2019) concluded that this activation occurs most often when a relationship ends abruptly, but any type of rejection can visibly impact the brain. The rise in acts such as breadcrumbing and ghosting behaviors could increase the rates of loneliness, hopelessness and lack of satisfaction with life in those who suffer from them. Research has not yet examined the consequences of experiencing ghosting and breadcrumbing victimization. However, media have published different opinions by psychologists and sociologists who warn about the harmful consequences of these types of online strategies to maintain or dissolve relationships. The long-term impact of ghosting was a concern of Jahrami et al. (2022) who considered the ghostees, in the future, may suffer from fear of renewed intimacy or closeness in relationships. The effects of ghosting experienced by non-initiator vary in their presentation and severity. LeFebvre and Fan (2020) found the implications for non-initiators of ghosting, such as, they are often more cautious in their future relationships and the communications, starts to accept that ghosting is commonplace and has

to move on from, they become are more pessimistic and cynical in their perspective and in many cases, have a heightened chance of experiencing negative emotions such as hurt, awkwardness, confusion, depression, and frustration. They start to rationalize more and may have a higher likelihood of discontinuing further dating and have higher sense of negative self-worth. Outside of the acceptance of what has happened and the ability to move on from being ghosted and/or breadcrumbed, these implications paint a negative picture of the possible outcomes for non-initiators. They have reported lowered self-esteem and distrust in others, with a small portion even reporting depression and panic attacks (Timmermans et al., 2020). When measuring attachment styles, non-initiators of ghosting have reported higher anxious attachment than those who have not previously been ghosted (Powell et al., 2019).

The ghosting phenomena is associated with collective passive avoidance, and avoiding any social responsibility. Sherry Turkle, a professor from MIT, stated in an interview (2020) for the Huffington Post that ghosting could have serious implications for ghostees' self-esteem and self-stigmatizing attitudes; and those who intend to initiate ghosting in a relationship, in some cases, have displayed moral disengagement, low self-esteem, hostile engagement and withdrawal conflict resolution styles.

Previous study has found certain emotional consequences to having been ghosted (Navarro et al., 2020). It has been found that people who experience both ghosting and related phenomena such as breadcrumbing, are less satisfied with life, feel lonelier, and feel more helpless compared to those with no such experiences in a romantic relationship (Navarro et al., 2020). There is also evidence to support that those who have been ghosted in a relationship, blame themselves and their own inadequacies and/or lose faith in humanity because the experience has made them more cautious toward dating in general (LeFebvre & Fan, 2020). But many individuals find justification for their actions despite viewing the practice in itself as deplorable (Manning et al., 2019). Ghosting is associated with breadcrumbing, which is the act of sending out flirtatious texts merely for the sake of attention and without serious intent. Research by Navarro et al. (2020) revealed that breadcrumbing, or flirtation without follow-up, was associated with diminished satisfaction in life and feelings of helplessness and loneliness, a correlation not found for ghosting. The explanation may lie in the direction of the effects. It is possible that lonely and dissatisfied people do not expose themselves to ghosting but may inadvertently become targets of breadcrumbing. It is well known that some individuals are much more sensitive to rejection than others.

Those experiencing ghosting in a relationship, often have a sense of unexpectedness and surprise as their first reaction to being ghosted, followed by confusion (Pancani et al., 2021). They may also feel concerned or worried at first, assuming that something bad has happened to the initiator (who ghosted in the relationship), even blaming themselves (LeFebvre, 2017) as cause for their lack of responsiveness (Timmermans et al., 2020). They then experience a second set of reactions characterized by anger and sadness (Pancani et al., 2021) after a certain point of time when they realize what has actually happened. The absence of confrontation in ghosting also predisposes non-initiators to feelings of guilt and self-blame as they worry that they might be responsible for the relationship ending (Pancani et al., 2021) and they finally arrive at acceptance.

Ghosting in most cases lacks closure for the non-initiator (Thomas & Dubar, 2021). The value of the relationship and its commitment level initiates responses to ghosting, and the reactions felt are more intense in a relationship with higher levels of value and commitment (Pancani et al., 2021). Some initiators have also identified concern for the non-initiator as a reason for ghosting, believing that directly rejecting the non-initiator would be more hurtful (Thomas & Dubar, 2021; Timmermans et al., 2020). Ghosting initiators have been found to experience less distress than those who initiate a breakup directly (Koessler et al., 2019), which may also expose a motivating factor behind ghosting. Initiators may try to disengage from a relationship in the way that is least upsetting for them.

Ghosting is a way of ending a relationship and breadcrumbing is a way of maintaining a connection (Navarro et al., 2020). In Navarro et al.'s (2020) study on the psychological correlates of breadcrumbing and ghosting, non-initiators of breadcrumbing reported less satisfaction with life and more perceived helplessness and loneliness. But no similar relationships were found between these variables and ghosting. This result has interesting implications on the harmful nature of breadcrumbing as opposed to ghosting; Navarro et al., (2020) explained that this discrepancy is a result of the ability to better recover from ghosting compared to the breadcrumbing experiences. LeFebvre and Fan (2020) also examined how people cope with being ghosted, but specifically looked at what strategies were effective and ineffective. Effective strategies resulted in reduced uncertainty and provided closure to the non-initiator, while ineffective strategies did not reduce but maintained uncertainty about the reasons for being ghosted and negated the ability to find closure. Effective strategies tended to focus on the future, accepting the relationship loss, and seeking alternative communication, interpersonal relationships, and intimacy. Distracting oneself and using positive self-focus can

also seem helpful. Again, seeking information about the initiator is considered an ineffective strategy, as is the negative self-focus that promotes psychological pain and self-blame. A high percentage of people going through such experiences report that there exist no strategies of coping with the aftermath of ghosting (LeFebvre & Fan, 2020).

Different factors may affect the ways an individual copes with the dissolution of a romantic relationship. Especially when the event is deemed to be stressful, and causes emotional turmoil. This turmoil must be dealt with in order manage one's state of mind, emotional and physical well-being (Caver et al., 1989), thus it is also important to understand how one may cope when ghosted. When relationships are romantic in nature, it is important to understand the romantic attachment of individuals with their current or ex-partner; because romantic attachment is related to how individuals cope upon relationship dissolution (Jerome & Liss, 2005). Furthermore, when examining romantic attachment (anxious and avoidant attachments), research (Feeney & Noller, 1992) found that anxiously attached individuals were very upset and surprised by the termination of their romantic relationship, whereas attachment avoidant individuals are relieved upon realizing the dissolution of their romantic relationship.

Although never easy, there are various ways, from protective to cruel, of ending a relationship. These can vary from gradual to abrupt and from face-to-face discussion and in-depth explanation to silence and avoidance such as ghosting and breadcrumbing. An extreme form of avoidance is called ghosting. Breadcrumbing is the phenomenon where the relationship is continued but lacks any form of commitment and responsibility form one person while keeping the other person hooked or interested just enough to be in the relationship. Ghosting is characterized by the sudden and unexpected termination of all forms of communication without a clear explanation or advanced discussion. This can happen either suddenly or gradually. With the technologies spreading world-wide in the world of dating, it is almost impossible to control any behaviours that in the end are causing more harm than being beneficial. The topics of ghosting and breadcrumbing might not be new to the dating world, but till now very few researches have been done with even less researches on how to prevent such behaviours. In India, there is a wide use of dating applications among the youth and such behaviours are becoming more and more prevalent.

This research aims to study and explore the attachment styles and loneliness among the young adults of India who have ghosting and breadcrumbing experiences in romantic relationships.

SUMMARY

Ghosting and breadcrumbing are considered maladaptive relationship styles which can stem from faulty beliefs about relationships, and the advancement of technology has fed through those ideas evenly more strongly. Individuals navigate their relationships with varying goals and concerns, their personality traits, their upbringing and their view of the external world largely affects these goals. The emotional vulnerabilities, negative view of self and others, insecure attachment styles, their differing thoughts about gain and accomplishments in a relationship are largely responsible for one's engagement in behaviours such as ghosting and breadcrumbing. Again, one's impaired social life, low self-esteem, distrust and hostile feelings and attitude towards their partners, feeling isolated and dissatisfied, all contribute to one's opting those negative relationship styles. Certain personality disorders make it difficult for one to form and maintain stable relationships, an individual with negative view of self, others and world, poor communication style and are unable to properly interact in society are more prone to perform the behaviours of ghosting and breadcrumbing in relationships.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is a critical analysis and study of existing research articles, books and other published sources on a particular topic to establish a well-structured context of the current research being conducted and to have a better understanding of the topic. In other words, literature review provides a background context for the ongoing research problem and as well as a comprehensive understanding of the previous researches being conducted in those fields.

The current study provides a comprehensive review of the previous researches that were conducted to study certain aspects of Ghosting and Breadcrumbing behaviors seen among the young adults.

2.1. A concise review of the key research findings is given below:

The term "ghosting", referring to the ending of a relationship abruptly by stopping all communications has only recently gained popularity, it has long been a common method of ending relationships. In a multi-method study, individuals who had both ghosted and been ghosted in past romantic engagements shared their narratives about their experiences of ghosting. The answers were analyzed and it was found that both ghosters and ghostees used comparable levels of positive and negative language to depict their experiences, but ghosters expressed feelings of guilt as well as relief, while ghostees expressed emotions of sadness and hurt. Additionally, ghostees felt a greater threat to their basic needs such as control, self-esteem, belongingness, and a sense of meaningful existence compared to the ghosters. (Freedman et al., 2024)

The study was conducted with 292 participants, has notable findings that the more one has ghosted, the more they have been ghosted themselves, also the more one has ghosted the more they ghost others. Further findings showed that the ones who were ghosted and those who were ghosted by others are more likely to have difficult social, emotional and psychological functioning when compared to those with fewer ghosting experiences. (Di Santo et al., 2022)

The phenomenon of ghosting is an emerging field of study within relationships and social psychology. A research study showed the circumstances and motivations behind people's decisions to ghost when ending relationships, where the participants were presented with diverse scenarios of relationship termination that is to ghost their potential partners. The findings indicated that the likelihood of ghosting decreased with greater commitment in the relationship and a longer duration in the relationship. However, no links were identified

between the Dark Triad traits and the willingness to ghost. The expected correlation where men with high narcissism are more prone to ghost their partners compared to women was not supported. (Sulymka & S.I., 2022)

A study was conducted in Spain to investigate whether individuals who have been ghosted are more inclined to ghost others by examining the correlation between initiating ghosting and experiencing victimization, as well as looking into how intentions to ghost relate to ghosting actions (both being ghosted and acting as a ghoster). The research confirmed a strong link between the initiation of ghosting and the experience of being ghosted, and a moderate association between ghosting initiation and the intention to ghost. (Navarro et al., 2021)

Another study suggested that Ghosting can take place beyond romantic contexts and even in situations where the relationship is ambiguous. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via video conferencing platforms with thirty participants aged 18 to 25 who have either ghosted a friend or have been ghosted by one. The findings indicated that ghosting in non-romantic relationships typically occurs through digital communication channels, initiators (Ghoster) often experience feelings of regret after the relationship ends and non-initiators (Ghosted) generally feel uncertain, ghosting a friend is perceived as more socially acceptable than ghosting a romantic partner, and ghosting tends to happen more frequently in non-romantic relationships due to lower levels of commitment and expectations. (Yap & Gopez, 2021)

The research paper aimed to explore the variations in three psychological constructs (life satisfaction, feelings of loneliness, and helplessness) among adults who have experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing. A total of 626 adults (303 men and 323 women), aged between 18 and 40 years, and whether someone they viewed as a dating partner had ghosted or breadcrumbed them in the past year. The findings indicated that those participants who reported experiencing breadcrumbing or a combination of both breadcrumbing and ghosting exhibited lower life satisfaction, along with increased feelings of helplessness and loneliness. However, no significant correlation was found between ghosting and any of the psychological correlates investigated. (Navarro et al., 2020)

A study conducted in Thailand where the participants were young adults aged between 18 to 30 years who have had experience of being ghosted. The study found that if one was more intimate with their partner in the relationship, they are more likely to experience negative emotions upon being ghosted. Again, the one more intimately involved and anxiously attached are likely to self-blame upon being ghosted whereas avoidantly attached individuals are less

likely to experience negative emotions or use emotional release or self-blame upon being ghosted. (Prasertwit, 2019)

Another research examined the factors that contribute to ghosting and breadcrumbing, two particular online social behaviors exhibited by young adults. The participant pool consisted of 578 individuals aged 18 to 27 who had experiences with ghosting and breadcrumbing (both as initiators and receivers). Across the overall sample, the most significant predictor of ghosting behavior was prior experiences of being ghosted. Conversely, breadcrumbing behavior was influenced by prior experiences with breadcrumbing, as well as moral disengagement, toxic disinhibition, and psychological distress. Experiences of being ghosted and levels of psychological distress were found to predict ghosting behavior as well as breadcrumbing behavior. Rejection sensitivity did not significantly influence the likelihood of either breadcrumbing or ghosting behavior. The participants' relationship status was relevant to the analysis of the data. The participants who were not in romantic relationships, toxic disinhibition was the probable cause behind ghosting behavior. (Cobzeanu & Măirean, 2025)

The research studied how terms such as "ghosting," "breadcrumbing," and "situationships" reflect the shifting expectations of commitment in a relationship, the impact of digital communication on romantic relationships, and the transformation of societal norms. By examining the relationship between language, technology, and the dynamics of relationships, the research illustrated how Gen Z's terminology informed their understanding of intimacy, love, and emotional well-being in romantic relationships. The findings highlighted how modern terms affect interpersonal conduct and influence societal perceptions of romantic relationships. (Singh, 2024)

Phrases that illustrate breakup methods such as ghosting and manipulative strategies such as breadcrumbing have become popular among young adults. These harmful relationship terms have garnered the attention of mental health professionals, and recent research has shown that online daters exhibiting narcissistic and Machiavellian traits frequently engage in dysfunctional relationship behaviors such as manipulation and self-serving actions while flirting or ending romantic connections. (Willis et al., 2023)

In the world of online dating, people experience a wide range of emotions, from the thrill of making new connections to the deep sorrow caused by issues such as Ghosting and Breadcrumbing. While common in digital dating, these behaviors have not been extensively studied, especially concerning their emotional consequences and the rejection they cause. The

research explored the emotional consequences of Ghosting and Breadcrumbing and analyzed how the personality traits of the affected individuals shaped their understanding of these behaviors. The study also looked into how the personality traits of the victim affect these experiences. The findings offered insights into the understanding of these online dating behaviors, their emotional consequences, and the role of personality traits in these experiences. Ghosting and Breadcrumbing are widespread; however, no definitive association was found between Breadcrumbing and personality traits. A negative correlation was noted between Ghosting and extroversion, implying that extroverted individuals may have greater resilience or experience a less severe emotional impact. However, both Ghosting and Breadcrumbing behaviours provoked significant emotional responses as individuals commonly go through a variety of feelings, including pain, shock, and confusion, underlining the psychological complexity of these issues. (Uusaro et al., 2023)

Breadcrumbing is a dating phenomenon that involves subtle manipulation within relationships and remains largely unexamined. With the rise of online dating platforms, individuals have begun to start, maintain, and end romantic connections, leading to an increase in the use of manipulative strategies on these sites. This study investigates the concept of breadcrumbing and its implications for the mental health and well-being of those affected, referred to as breadcrumbies. Research conducted in India utilized a qualitative design, conducting focus group discussions. Two focus group discussions included a total of nine participants (one male and eight females). After analyzing the data, five key themes emerged that define breadcrumbing - charisma, leading someone on, inconsistency, reluctance to invest emotionally, and uncertainty regarding commitment. Conversations also revealed that breadcrumbing negatively affected the future relationships, emotional stability, self-image, and signs of depression in the breadcrumbies. (Khattar et al., 2023)

A study was conducted to examine the prevalence of ghosting and breadcrumbing among Spanish adults aged 18 to 40. This specific paper focused on the prevalence of ghosting and breadcrumbing, as well as their connections to online dating behaviors. Findings indicated that half of the respondents were not familiar with the concepts of ghosting and breadcrumbing. Around 20% of participants stated they had either undergone or initiated ghosting, while just over 30% reported experiencing or starting breadcrumbing in the past year. The study has revealed that utilizing online dating platforms, engaging in more short-term relationships, and conducting online surveillance heighten the chances of both experiencing and initiating ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviours. (Navarro et al., 2020)

The emergence of new media technologies such as social media, instant messaging, and online dating applications have transformed the way individuals discuss relationships. These forms of computer-mediated communication have resulted in the rise of new vocabulary to describe how romantic relationships are initiated, sustained, and ended in the modern digital landscape. (LeFebvre et al., 2019)

The cross-sectional study was conducted examined how adult attachment styles relate to psychological well-being across different age groups (young adults versus adults) and relationship statuses (single versus in close relationships) and was seen that those in stable close relationships showed higher levels of psychological well-being compared to those who were single. Again, the singles showed to have an attachment style that indicated discomfort with intimacy, viewing romantic relationships as secondary, and demonstrating avoidance; and their psychological well-being was moderately and positively influenced by an attachment style marked with confidence, whereas it was strongly and negatively influenced by a need for approval in their attachment style. In contrast, for individuals in stable relationships, psychological well-being was strongly and negatively influenced by attachment style related to the need for approval. (Sagone et al., 2023)

The research was conducted to explore the connection between ghosting, depression, anxiety, stress, and attachment styles among Indian adults aged 20 to 45 years. Ghosting behavior defined as 'the act of ending a relationship by abruptly stopping all communication without providing an explanation', is no longer confined to romantic contexts but is also prevalent across various types of relationships, including familial, friendly, and professional connections. It was seen that ghosting is positively related to stress, anxiety, and depression; is also positively correlated with attachment styles characterized by closeness and dependence; while it is negatively related to attachment styles marked by anxiety. The results found showed that a high frequency of ghosting behavior adversely impacts an individual’s mental well-being, potentially causing adverse personality changes. The insights gained from this research can serve to create preventive or curative measures, leading to policy modifications and can be beneficial in clinical/counseling contexts for effective psychotherapy; can also be applied within legal frameworks for civil matters, familial issues such as property disputes or divorce cases, etc. (Lad & Mansukhani, 2023)

The study conducted to explain the relationship experiences concerning the darker facets of personality, known as the Dark Triad found that the dark triad (composed of narcissism,

subclinical psychopathy and Machiavellianism) had a direct positive influence on attachment style of those in close relationships. (Čopková, R., & Lörincová, E., 2021)

A study was conducted which involved Spanish heterosexual young adult couples with those having matching attachment styles; and others having secure attachment styles. The study examined whether the conflict resolution styles of romantic partners and their perceived relationship quality are affected by their attachment dynamics. Findings have indicated that there is no significant differences between couples with matching and non-matching attachment styles. However, having either one or both the partners in a relationship with a secure attachment style was linked to higher relationship quality and a reduced tendency to use dysfunctional conflict resolution strategies. For young adults with insecure attachment, it is more beneficial to be in a relationship with a partner who has a secure attachment style rather than with a partner who has a similar insecure attachment style. (González-Ortega, 2020)

Personality disorders (PDs) are frequently linked to disruptions in romantic relationships. But there has been limited research on the types of partners that individuals with PD choose and the factors that account for the connection between PD severity and relationship disruptions. People who were identified as having PD participated in a conflict exercise, underwent assessments for PDs and attachment through semi-structured interviews, and provided self-reports on their relationship satisfaction. Partners did not exhibit similar levels of PD severity but showed a slight degree of similarity in specific attachment styles and were moderately aligned in attachment insecurity and interpersonal challenges. Furthermore, PD severity influenced how one partner's attachment anxiety is related to the other's attachment avoidance. By employing a dyadic analytic approach, it was found that that attachment anxiety, along with both the partners's withdrawal behaviors, there was a clear link between PD severity and relationship satisfaction. Individuals often choose romantic partners who share similar attachment disturbances and interpersonal challenges, and that attachment styles and PD severity are associated with satisfaction in romantic relationships. (Beeney et al., 2019)

The study aimed to explore the connection between self-esteem, attachment styles, and loneliness among college students aged between 18 to 21 years from colleges throughout Mumbai. The results were analyzed and compared across genders and the findings indicated that there were no significant differences between male and female participants on any of the scales used. Although a negative correlation was found between self-esteem and loneliness and similar negative correlations were detected between self-esteem and both anxiety and avoidant

attachment styles. On the other hand, a positive correlation was identified between loneliness and anxiety, as well as avoidant attachment styles. Thus, it was found that self-esteem is associated with attachment styles and loneliness among students in college. (Thakkar et al., 2016)

The study to understand motivational preferences explored how relationship concerns reflected wider life goals. It was identified that there existed a consistent approach-oriented relationship orientation (secure attachment) correlated with a more approach-oriented general life orientation (lower actual-ideal discrepancy and higher promotion focus). However, attachment style did not relate to avoidance-oriented motivational styles. (Blalock et al., 2015)

Another study was performed upon 200 Indian adults in the age group of 18 to 25 years who has been in a romantic relationship to examine if there exists any association between insecure adult attachment style, fear of intimacy and life satisfaction was published with the findings showing that they are related. (Mohan et al., 2024)

Romantic relationships can bring about positive and as well as deeply negative experiences. As a result, individuals may feel completely connected or isolated within a romantic relationship, depending on its quality. Research studies, both cross-sectional and longitudinal, have indicated that loneliness (characterized as a perceived lack of fulfillment in a person's social and personal connections) is seen more in relationships of poor quality. There is also limited known facts about the daily factors contributing to loneliness within couples. The research revealed that those participants who were having lower-quality activities with their partner experienced heightened daily loneliness. Loneliness serves not just as an effect of, but also as a contributing factor to, how individuals perceive daily activities with their partners. Neither gender nor age have impacted any of these relationships. (Nikitin et al., 2023)

A study was conducted to examine the relationship between attachment styles and loneliness playing a mediating role in the development of early maladaptive schemas (EMS) among young adults. The participants were all college students of the universities of Kermanshah. The findings showed that the avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles are related to loneliness through two early maladaptive schemas of disconnection-rejection and other-directedness in a relationship. (Jalilian et al., 2023)

Loneliness is the quantitative and qualitative deficiency of one’s personal and social relationships. In the study published, the findings suggested that loneliness is mainly related to

how individuals perceive their partners in the relationship, rather than its more objective characteristics or daily interactions among the partners. (Mund et al., 2022)

Based on the extensive global media coverage, it was found that loneliness is becoming an increasingly pressing social issue especially among young adults. Since the late 1970s, the experiences of young adults have undergone significant changes due to societal factors like the fragmentation of social connections, enhanced mobility, and shifts in communication driven by technological advances. These societal shifts could be linked to a rise in loneliness among the young adults. The cross-temporal study suggested that loneliness may be an escalating issue during in young adulthood. While the commonly used phrase “loneliness epidemic” might seem overstated, it is crucial to consider young adults when planning interventions aimed at reducing loneliness. (Buecker et al., 2021)

In 2020, the global community came to a halt due to the outbreak of Coronavirus. Lockdowns were enforced worldwide, requiring individuals to stay in their homes. Under these circumstances, while practicing "social distancing," many experienced a profound sense of isolation from their loved ones for long durations. Numerous individuals confined to their temporary living situations faced tremendous solitude and loneliness. These circumstances significantly affected people's mental well-being. Individuals often overlook their mental health. When confronted with such stressful environments, the effect on mental well-being can be severe. With loneliness reaching peak levels, the study explored the connection between loneliness and mental health outcomes. This research aimed to investigate the influence of loneliness on mental health. The findings revealed a negative correlation between loneliness and mental health, as anticipated and stated that spending additional time with loved ones can contribute positively to sustaining a healthy mental state. (Kaur, 2021)

Another research was published based on data collected from the adults aged between 18 to 35 years in India to understand the effect of loneliness on attachment styles in young adults during pandemic. Notable findings showed that loneliness has an effect on ambivalent insecure, secure and avoidant insecure attachment styles. (Swapnil & Sahai, 2021)

Thus, it can be said that ghosting, the strategy of ending relationship with the potential partner without giving the person any explanation or prior warning and breadcrumbing behaviour which is where the person shows just enough interest to his or her partner to be in the relationship but lacks any deeper connections. These behaviours are seen mostly among young adults. Those who are involved in such behaviours are more likely to have lower levels of

commitment as well as low expectations from their relationships, unable to build a proper attachment with their partners and which in turn can cause heightened experiences of loneliness among the young adults.

2.2 Research gap:

The majority of the studies conducted on this topic were mostly in United States and Spain. Very few researches were conducted in India. This topic seriously lacks broader global view point. The relationship experiences of ghosting and breadcrumbing have become a common experience and a steep rise is seen with the advancement of technologies such as the use of dating application (apps) and the drastic change in relationship formation and experiences. The concept of ghosting among the young adults in India are not so well researched or studied by experts. It was difficult to find any writings related to the ghosting experiences in relationships and their attachment styles whether they affect those in Indian population. A very few researches were conducted on breadcrumbing experiences among the young adults of India. Researches also lack information about how variables such as adult attachment styles and loneliness interact among the young adults who experienced breadcrumbing and those who experienced ghosting in romantic relationships.

2.3. Rationale :

The current society is seeing massive advancements of technologies worldwide which is gradually changing our ways of communicating, our ways of forming and even maintaining relationships. The use of such technologies has increased among people of all age groups, especially among young adults. The world of dating has also seen a steep rise in the use of technologies such as dating applications (apps), text messaging applications, social media platforms and others. The use of such technologies might have made it easier to find partners in a world where there is very limited or no time to have a healthy social and personal life, they have also given rise to certain maladaptive dating behaviours such as ghosting and breadcrumbing. In India, such dating applications are heavily used and behaviours such as ghosting and breadcrumbing are becoming more and more prevalent among the youth. These behaviours can be a result of one's attachment styles and can even stem from loneliness. Their attachment styles can have a direct influence on their relationship with their romantic partners. Again, when someone who is suffering from loneliness is unable to form or maintain a healthy romantic relationship, leading to one engaging in such maladaptive dating behaviours. Very

few researches have been done in this field as of now and only a handful of researches are done in India.

Hence, the study will explore the attachment styles and loneliness among the young adults of India who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in romantic relationship.

SUMMARY

The literature review on ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviours and the attachment styles and feelings of loneliness among the young adults engaging in such behaviours plays a critical role in consolidating and synthesizing existing research findings in this area. The review begins by defining the ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviours and what makes one to engage in such behaviours, and whether factors such as their attachment styles and feelings of loneliness are influencing ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviours among the young adults. Studies have shown that insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant attachment styles), communication patterns, personality disorders, lack of any connection with the potential partner in a relationship, prior experiences with sudden dissolution or ending of any relationships and increasing feelings of loneliness among young adults of this generation where there is a upsurge in the advancement of technologies and gradual increase in the use of online dating platforms may have all contributed to ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviours. By examining these factors comprehensibly, researchers can deepen their understanding of ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviours as they are fairly new terms and only a handful of research work has been done so far; and can work out intervention plans aimed at reducing such behaviours by addressing the underlying dynamics behind one's engaging in ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviours.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

3. METHODS

3.1. Aim of the study: To explore and to compare the significant differences if any between attachment style and loneliness among young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in a relationship. The study also aims to explore the significant association if any between attachment style and loneliness among young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in a romantic relationship. The study includes a cross-sectional design and a quantitative analysis method.

3.2. Objectives:

3.2.1 To explore and to study the significant differences if any in respect to attachment style (avoidant and anxious) among young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in a relationship.

3.2.2 To explore and to study the significant differences if any in respect to loneliness among young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in a relationship.

3.2.3 To study the significant association if any between attachment style (avoidant and anxious) and loneliness among young adults who experienced ghosting in a relationship.

3.3.4 To study the significant association if any between attachment style (avoidant and anxious) and loneliness among young adults who experienced breadcrumbing in a relationship.

3.3. Hypotheses:

3.3.1 There is no significant difference in respect to attachment style (avoidant and anxious) among young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in a relationship.

3.3.2 There is no significant difference in respect to loneliness among young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in a relationship.

3.3.3 There is no significant association between attachment style (avoidant and anxious) and loneliness among young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in a relationship.

3.4. Variables Under Study :

- Relationship Experience: Ghosting and Breadcrumbing
- Attachment Style: Avoidant and Anxious
- Loneliness

3.5. Operational Definition of the Variables :

- *Ghosting* : Ghosting is a dissolution strategy in relationships where the one initiating or performing this behaviour terminates or end all kinds of communications with their potential partner without giving any explanations. Ghosting in a relationship mostly occurs through a lack of communication or complete avoidance altogether. It is a strategy for ending a relationship, where one person, known as the "ghoster" stops all communication with their partner without providing any explanation.
- *Breadcrumbing* : Breadcrumbing is a dating phenomenon that involves subtle manipulation within relationships which can be seen as "the act of sending out flirtatious but non-committal messages (breadcrumbs), in order to lure their partner without expending much effort". It can also be defined as the way of leading someone by contacting them intermittently to keep the other person interested and hopeful about the relationship.
- *Attachment Style* : Attachment styles are characterized by different ways of interacting and behaving in a relationship. These are the patterns that emerge from our earliest bonds with caregivers. These early attachment styles play an important role in childhood developments and influence attachment patterns in adult relationships.
- *Loneliness* : Loneliness is a state of mind. People who feel lonely often crave human contact, but their state of mind makes it more difficult to form connections with others. It is a universal human emotion that is both complex and unique to each individual. Loneliness can be marked by feelings of isolation despite wanting connections. It is often perceived as an involuntary separation, rejection or abandonment by other people.

3.6. Tools used in the study :-

- **Informed Consent Form** – A form that is first presented to the participants which contained the purpose of the study, stated about voluntary participation and also mentioned about the maintaining confidentiality of the information obtained. Participant's and Researcher's signature is also obtained in the form.

- **Sociodemographic Data Form** - An information form that is created to gather the sociodemographic information such as age, gender, residential area, mother tongue, educational qualification, employment status, relationship status, family type, family income, residential area and whether one has any physical or psychological illness, history of significant brain injury or whether one has history of substance dependency; of the participants.
- **Adult attachment questionnaire (AAQ)** - The Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ) by Simpson, Rholes and Nelligan (1996) was developed for the purposes of studying how adult attachment styles moderate spontaneous behaviour between dating couples when one member of the dyad is confronted with an anxiety-provoking situation. This is a 17-item questionnaire, that asks individuals to indicate how they relate to their romantic partners in general. The questionnaire was created based on 3 attachment styles – secure, avoidant and anxious/ambivalent; originally created by Hazan and Shaver (1987). The items of the measure are answered on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree). The measure has two dimensions: Avoidance (8 items; e.g., "I find it relatively easy to get close to others") and Anxiety (9 items; e.g., "I rarely worry about being abandoned by others") (Brennan et al., 1998; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). Items 1, 3, 4, 12, 14, 16, and 17 have reverse scoring in the scale. The Avoidance scale is comprised of items 1-3 and 5-9. Higher scores on this dimension reflect greater avoidance. The Anxiety scale is comprised of items 4 and 10-17. Higher scores on this dimension reflect greater anxiety. Greater attachment security is defined by lower scores on both scales. Avoidance items have a score range of 8-56. Anxiety items have a score range of 9-63. The Cronbach Alpha for Avoidance items are .70 for men and .74 for women and for Anxiety items are .72 for men and .76 for women, indicating the dimensions of the measure being internally consistent.
- **BREAD-ASR Questionnaire** - Breadcrumbing in Affective-Sexual Relationships (BREAD-ASR) Questionnaire is a 16-item measure, developed by Rodríguez-García et al., (2020), which assesses breadcrumbing engagement behaviours in adolescent relationships online. The questionnaire measures 4 factors – Factor 1 (F1) in Communication (Items 8,13,14,15), Factor 2 (F2) is Avoidance (Items 10,11,12), Factor 3 (F3) is Commitment (Items 6,7,9) and Factor 4 (F4) is Dependence (Items 1,2,3,4,5,16). Item examples include "I avoid being in person with my partner"; "I contact my partner when I feel alone"; "Communication with my partner depends on my interest and availability"; "I avoid talking about feelings with my partner". Participants indicate on a 5-point Likert scale from 1

(indicating never/totally disagree) to 5 (indicating always/totally agree) based on their levels of agreement/disagreement with the statements. Higher levels of breadcrumbing engagement are represented by a higher total score. The BREAD-ASR Questionnaire has a satisfactory content and construct validity with an internal consistency (Cronbach´s Alpha) of 0.83.

- **Romantic Ghosting Scale – Colombia (RG-C)** – The Romantic Ghosting scale was developed by Herrera-Lopez et al., in 2024 for the purpose of measuring ghosting behaviour in romantic relationships, its roles and its emotional impact on people who ghost or were ghosted. The scale has initially used 18 Likert-type items, of which the first 10 items were assessed using dual response system based on the premise: "How often does/did the use this behaviour against you?", "How often do/did you use this behaviour against them?". The statements in the scale are related to breakups in relationships in the context of romantic interests. The scoring system is based on 5-point Likert scale where 1= Never/Not at all, 2= Hardly ever/On few occasions, 3=Sometimes/May be, 4=Nearly always/I probably would and 5=Always/I definitely would. From the EFA, 3 items with communalities below .30 and saturations below .40 were rejected (RV – RA 6; IE 16 and 17) leaving a total of 15 global items, of which the first 10 items were divided into two categories – Aggression and Victimization; there is a third category called Emotional Impact. The dimensions are called Role of Victim or RV (Items 1-5, 7-10), Role of Aggressor or RV (Items 1-5, 7-10) and Emotional Impact or EI (Items 11-15 & 18). The Cronbach's Alpha for RV items is .90, for items of RA it is .86 and for EI it is .87. the McDonald's Omega for items of RV is .91, for RA is .88 and for EI is .88. The Composite Reliability or CR for the Items of RV, RA & EI are all .89, the scale has good content and construct validity along with excellent reliability values.
- **Scale of Loneliness (SoLo)** – The scale is a self-report measure of loneliness designed for use in autistic adults as well as for the general population. It was developed by Williams et al., (2023). There are 10 items in the scale. Scoring is done by adding the scores of all 10 items. The forward coded items of the scale are scored: 0= Very untrue of me, 1= Untrue of me, 2= Somewhat untrue of me, 3= somewhat true of me, 4= True of me & 5= Very true of me. There is a reverse scoring for reverse-coded items 4,5,8 and 10; rest are forward coded items. The score range is 0–50. Bifactor model with 10 items and 2 specific factors (for forward/reverse-coded) shows C2(25) =40.64, p=0.025, TLIC2= 0.990, RMSEAC2 = 0.046, and SRMR= 0.041. Bifactor coefficients indicate high reliability, GƆT=0.950), strong general factor saturation, GƆH=0.870), and essential unidimensionality

(ECVG=0.720). The test-retest reliability is high (ICC (1,1) =0.847, CI95% [0.811, 0.876]). The measure seeks to differentiate loneliness from related constructs such as social isolation and depression.

3.7. Participants of The Study:

The study focused on young adults. The sample consisted of **75** participants aged between **18 to 30 years.** The sample was selected based on their past relationship experiences. Initially the sample consisted of 80 individuals of which 5 of them were discarded due to reporting mental health issues, falling beyond the selected age group and giving incomplete responses.

• **Breadcrumbing Group (n=33)** : Individuals who were led on with inconsistent engagement.

• **Ghosting Group (n=42)** : Individuals who were either ignored or cut off in a relationship or they themselves initiated such behaviours in the relationship.

3.8. Inclusion Criteria:

Participants must meet the following criteria –

- **Age range:** 18-30 years (young adults)
- **Relationship Experience**: The participants must have experiences with Breadcrumbing and Ghosting behaviours in a relation.
- **Language Proficiency**: The participants must be fluent in the language of the questionnaires i.e., English
- **Willingness to participate**: The participants must be provided Informed consent and they must voluntarily participate in the study.

3.9. Exclusion Criteria:

Participants are excluded if they –

- Have never been in a relationship (participants who are currently not in a relationship but at some point, involved in a romantic relationship are included in the study).
- Report mental health issues (e.g., diagnosed clinical depression or anxiety, disorders resulting in hospitalization, as they may confound the study variables)
- Provide inconsistent or incomplete responses in the screening phase.

3.10. Sampling Technique used:

- Purposive Sampling Technique

In the present study, purposive sampling is used. The main goal of using purposive sampling technique is to identify particular traits, patterns and behaviours of a chosen portion of the population. Purposive Sampling involves "on-purpose" unit selection. Purposive Sampling, also known as Judgmental or Selective Sampling, is a sampling method, used by researchers to purposefully select study participants using their own standards or judgement. It is a non-probability sampling technique, where the participants are chosen based on certain criteria, that fit the study's objectives. It is an intentional and strategic selection procedure that uses samples to explore their characteristics.

3.11. Procedure:

The participants were first provided an Informed Consent Form and were informed about the purpose of the study, involuntary participation and confidentiality of the information obtained. An anonymous form was made consisting if the Consent form, Sociodemographic details, Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ), BREAD-ASR, Romantic Ghosting Scale and Scale of Loneliness (SoLo).

After the participants willingly agreed to be part of the study, they were asked to complete the questionnaire, where the BREAD-ASR and Romantic Ghosting Scale were Screening questionnaires given to confirm the eligibility and categorize the participants into two groups. The participants were asked specific questions regarding their past romantic experiences to ensure correct classification.

After the data was received, an Excel Sheet was prepared and the responses were recorded and scored. Later statistical analysis was done using SPSSv22. Finally, the data was interpreted according to the analysis.

3.12. Statistical Analysis:

- Descriptive Statistics: Mean, standard deviation and standard error of mean will be done for all the variables.
- Shapiro-Wilk test will be used to assess the normal distribution of the data.
- Independent t-test will be done to find any significant differences if any between adult attachment styles (avoidant and anxious) / loneliness among young adults with breadcrumbing and ghosting experiences in romantic relationships.
- Pearson's correlation (r) will be used to find association if any between adult attachment style (avoidant and anxious) and loneliness among young adults who experienced breadcrumbing and ghosting in romantic relationships.
- The results will be interpreted using standard reporting guidelines.
- SPSSv22 is used for the analysis.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

4. RESULTS

4.1. Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality was conducted to ensure the normal distribution of the data.

Table 1 : Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistics	**df**	**Sig.**	**Statistic**	**df**	**Sig.**
Avoidant Attachment	0.066	75	0.200	0.987	75	0.623
Anxiety Attachment	0.082	75	0.200	0.973	75	0.106
Loneliness	0.084	75	0.200	0.983	75	0.430

Table 1 : The Avoidant attachment style score for Shapiro Wilk test is 0.623 which is greater than 0.05, thus the data is Normally Distributed. The Anxious attachment style score for Shapiro Wilk test is 0.106, which is greater than 0.05, thus indicating the data is Normally Distributed. The Loneliness Score for Shapiro Wilk is 0.430 which is greater than 0.05, thus indicating the data is Normally Distributed.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation and Standard Error Mean) were computed in respect to Avoidant attachment style, Anxious attachment style and Loneliness among young adults who experienced Ghosting and Breadcrumbing in romantic relationships.

Table 2 : Mean, standard Deviation and Standard error of mean of the above-mentioned variables are represented in the following table.

Variables	Relationship Experiences	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Avoidant Attachment Style	Breadcrumbing	33	29.09	7.601	1.32314
	Ghosting	42	29.26	8.566	1.32169
Anxious Attachment Style	Breadcrumbing	33	40.39	6.383	1.11119
	Ghosting	42	35.81	6.837	1.105496
Loneliness	Breadcrumbing	33	22.09	8.501	1.47989
	Ghosting	42	25.07	7.801	1.20365

Table 2 : The results showing the mean values of the variables Avoidant attachment style, Anxious attachment style and Loneliness for the Relationship experiences: Breadcrumbing and Ghosting. Findings show that Anxious Attachment style has higher Mean with respect to Breadcrumbing and Ghosting experiences among young adults.

4.3. FIGURE 1 : Graphical Representation of Mean in respect to all the variables Avoidant attachment style, Anxious attachment style and Loneliness among young adults who experienced Ghosting and Breadcrumbing in romantic relationships.

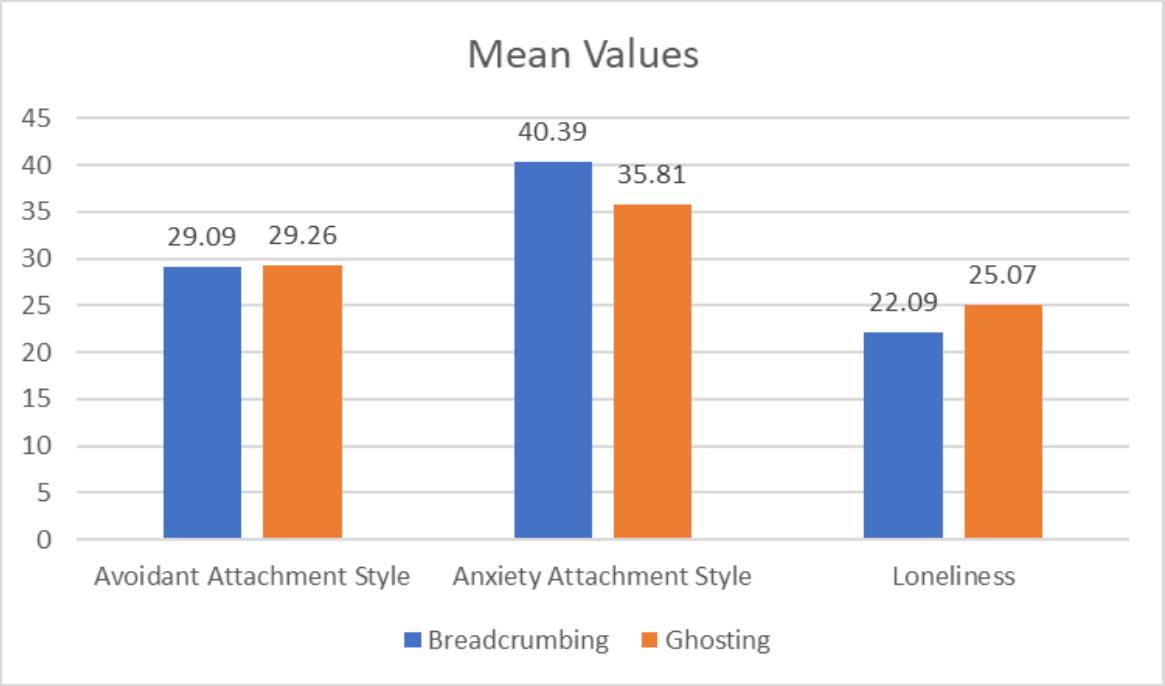

Figure 1: The bar graph showing the mean values of the variables Avoidant attachment style, Anxious attachment style and Loneliness for the Relationship Experiences: Breadcrumbing and Ghosting.

4.4. Independent Samples t-test was conducted to study the differences if any between Attachment styles (Avoidant and Anxious) and Loneliness among young adults who experienced Ghosting and Breadcrumbing in romantic relationships.

Table 3 : Independent Samples t-test values of the above-mentioned variables.

Variables	Relationship Experiences	t-value	df (n=75)	Significant value (p-value)
Avoidant Attachment Style	Breadcrumbing	-0.091	71.871	0.927
	Ghosting			
Anxious Attachment Style	Breadcrumbing	**2.992****	70.794	**0.004****
	Ghosting			
Loneliness	Breadcrumbing	-1.562	65.850	0.123
	Ghosting			

Table 3 : The results show that there exists a significant difference between Anxious attachment style and Ghosting and Breadcrumbing behaviours among young adults. (p<0.01, significant at 0.01 level of significance).**

4.5. Pearson's Correlation was conducted to study the association, if any, between Attachment styles (Avoidant and Anxious) and Loneliness among young adults who experienced Breadcrumbing in romantic relationships.

Table 4: Pearson's Correlation

Breadcrumbing Group	N	Correlation Value (r)	p-value
Avoidant Attachment style	33	-0.238	0.182
Anxious Attachment style	33	0.048	0.790
Loneliness	33	-0.128	0.477

Table 4 : The results show that there exists no association between Attachment styles (Avoidant and Anxious) and Loneliness among young adults who experienced Breadcrumbing in romantic relationships.

4.6. Pearson's Correlation was conducted to study the association, if any, between Attachment styles (Avoidant and Anxious) and Loneliness among young adults who experienced Ghosting in romantic relationships.

Table 5 : Pearson's Correlation

Ghosting Group	N	Correlation Value (r)	p-value
Avoidant Attachment style	42	-0.138	0.382
Anxious Attachment style	42	0.120	0.448
Loneliness	42	-0.103	0.515

Table 4 : The results show that there exists no association between Attachment styles (Avoidant and Anxious) and Loneliness among young adults who experienced Ghosting in romantic relationships.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

5. DISCUSSION

The current study aims to explore and study the significant differences if any between attachment style and loneliness among young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in a relationship. It also aims to study the significant association if any between attachment style and loneliness among young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in a romantic relationship. A cross-sectional study is done using quantitative analysis method. The sample included 75 young adults aged between 18 and 30 years, of which 33 of them have experiences with Breadcrumbing behaviour and 42 of them are familiar with Ghosting behaviour in romantic relationship. Breadcrumbing can be seen as "the act of sending out flirtatious but non-committal messages (breadcrumbs), in order to lure their partner without expending much effort". It can also be defined as the way of leading someone by contacting them intermittently to keep the other person interested. Ghosting has now become a topic of psychological interest because as occurs frequently among the young adults, and can cause significant mental distress, about which little has been researched. Ghosting is characterized by the sudden and unexpected termination of all forms of communication without a clear explanation or advanced discussion with the other person in the relationship. Psychiatrist John Bowlby during the second half of the 20th century, developed attachment theory which emphasizes the importance of a strong emotional bond between the infant and the caregiver. From that perspective, loneliness occurs when one with insecure attachment patterns behave in ways that result in their being rejected by their peers, partners and others. Those rejections increase their distrust of other people, thereby fostering ongoing loneliness.

The Shapiro-Wilk test (Table 1) was conducted to ensure the normal distribution of the data. The findings showed the Shapiro-Wilk score for variables Avoidance attachment style (Shapiro Wilk = 0.623), Anxious attachment style (Shapiro Wilk = 0.106), and Loneliness (Shapiro Wilk = 0.430) are all greater than 0.05 level of significance, thus indicating that the data is normally distributed.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics where the mean value for Avoidant attachment style is 29.09 for the sample of 33 people within the age range of 18 to 30 years who experienced Breadcrumbing experiences and 29.26 for the sample of 42 people aged between 18 to 30 years who had experiences with Ghosting. The mean value for Anxious Attachment style for the group with Breadcrumbing experiences is 40.39 and for the group with Ghosting experience is 35.81. Mean value for the variable Loneliness for Breadcrumbing Group is 22.09 and for the

Ghosting group is 25.07. The Anxious attachment style has the highest mean value for the sample. It implies that the significant attachment style for the sample is anxious attachment style. The standard deviation for the Anxious attachment style shows that the data is more clustered closely around the mean (σ for Breadcrumbing group is 6.383 and σ for Ghosting group is 6.837).

Table 3 shows the independent t-test value for the variables Avoidant attachment style, Anxious attachment style and Loneliness. The findings indicate that there is no significant difference between avoidant attachment style (t = -0.091, p-value = 0.927) and loneliness (t = -1.562, p-value = 0.123) and young adults who experienced Breadcrumbing and Ghosting in romantic relationships. However, it was found that there is a significant difference between anxious attachment style (t-value = 2.99, p-value = 0.004) and young adults who experienced Breadcrumbing and Ghosting in romantic relationships. This implies that those who engage in breadcrumbing and ghosting behaviour have anxious attachment style, hence, they find it difficult to be form and maintain a stable relationship. The study conducted showed that adult romantic attachment styles is one of the factors behind ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviours (Collins & Read, 1990) which have two dimensions; Avoidant and Anxious (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998). Wei and colleagues (2004) argued that attachment is better conceptualized as two continuous dimensions, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Cameron et al., 2012). A study done by Feeney & Noller (1992) found that anxiously attached individuals are very upset and surprised by the termination of their romantic relationship, whereas attachment avoidant individuals are relieved at the news of their relationship dissolution. A study conducted in Thailand where the participants were young adults aged between 18 to 30 years who had experience of being ghosted, found that the one more intimately involved and anxiously attached are likely to self-blame upon being ghosted or breadcrumbed whereas avoidantly attached individuals are less likely to experience negative emotions or use emotional release or self-blame upon being ghosted. (Prasertwit, 2019). It was also seen that ghosting is positively related to stress, anxiety, and depression; is also positively correlated with attachment styles characterized by closeness and dependence; while it is negatively related to attachment styles marked by anxiety (Lad & Mansukhani, 2023).

For the variable Loneliness (Table 3), it is seen that there is no significant difference present for the young adults who experienced Breadcrumbing and Ghosting in romantic relationships (t-value = -1.562 and p-value = 0.123). Romantic relationships can bring about positive and as well as deeply negative experiences. As a result, individuals may feel completely connected or

isolated within a romantic relationship, depending on its quality. However, research studies have indicated that loneliness (characterized as a perceived lack of fulfillment in a person's social and personal connections) is seen more in relationships of poor quality. The research revealed that those participants who were having lower-quality activities with their partner experienced heightened daily loneliness. Loneliness serves not just as an effect of, but also as a contributing factor to, how individuals perceive daily activities with their partners. Neither gender nor age have impacted any of these relationships (Nikitin et al., 2023). Loneliness is the quantitative and qualitative deficiency of one's personal and social relationships. In the study published, the findings suggested that loneliness is mainly related to how individuals perceive their partners in the relationship, rather than its more objective characteristics or daily interactions among the partners. (Mund et al., 2022).

The findings of Table 4 showed that there is no significant association between avoidant attachment style ($r = -0.238$ and p-value = 0.182), anxious attachment style ($r = 0.048$ and p-value = 0.790) and loneliness ($r = -0.128$ and p-value = 0.477) for those who engaged in breadcrumbing behaviours in romantic relationships. It was thus found that there is no significant association present between adult attachment style (avoidant and anxious) and loneliness for the young adults with breadcrumbing experiences. Research was published based on data collected from the adults aged between 18 to 35 years in India to understand the effect of loneliness on attachment styles in young adults during pandemic. Notable findings showed that loneliness has an effect on avoidant insecure attachment styles (Swapnil & Sahai, 2021). The results further showed that there exists no significant association between avoidant attachment style ($r = -0.138$ and p-value = 0.382), anxious attachment style ($r = 0.120$ and p-value = 0.448) and loneliness ($r = -0.103$ and p-value = 0.515) for the young adults who experienced ghosting in romantic relationships. Thus, it can be said that there is no significant association present between adult attachment style (avoidant and anxious) and loneliness for the young adults with ghosting experiences. A study aimed to explore the connection between self-esteem, attachment styles, and loneliness among college students aged between 18 to 21 years from colleges throughout Mumbai. A negative correlation was found between self-esteem and loneliness and similar negative correlations were detected between self-esteem and both anxiety and avoidant attachment styles. On the other hand, a positive correlation was identified between loneliness and anxiety, as well as avoidant attachment styles. It was found that self-esteem is associated with attachment styles and loneliness among students in college. (Thakkar et al., 2016).

Thus, it can be said that those who exhibit anxious attachment style, are characterized by fear of abandonment by their partners in a relationship. These individuals are more highly dependent on other's acceptance and affirmation; however, they tend to avoid intimacy to avert the pain of loss and rejection in a relationship due to their negative expectation. They find it difficult to form and maintain stable relationships over their course of life.

SUMMARY

The goal of the study was to explore and compare the significant differences if any between attachment style and loneliness and to study the significant association if any between attachment style and loneliness among young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in a romantic relationship. The research findings showed that there exists a significant difference in respect to anxious attachment style among adults who has experiences of breadcrumbing and ghosting in romantic relationships. Thus, it implies that individuals with anxious attachment style are more prone to engage in behaviours such as breadcrumbing, which is the way of leading someone by contacting them intermittently to keep the other person interested and ghosting, which is the sudden disruption or breaking away of all form forms of communication with the potential partner without giving any prior explanation to the person. It involves keeping the other person's expectation going about the possible relationship while the person performing such behaviours, has no actual intention of dating. Individuals with anxious attachment have fear of being abandoned, rejected and underappreciated, hence, instead of engaging in a stable relationship they prefer to maintain their personal space and avoid getting too close to others.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

6. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to explore and compare the significant differences if any between attachment style and loneliness and to study the significant association if any between attachment style and loneliness among young adults who experienced ghosting and breadcrumbing in a romantic relationship. The study provided information for understanding the differences between attachment styles (avoidant and anxious) and as well as between loneliness among young adults with certain relationship experiences. The findings showed that there exists a significant difference in respect to anxious attachment style among young adults who experienced breadcrumbing and ghosting in romantic relationships. Behaviours like breadcrumbing and ghosting have become common in modern dating styles. More research is required to fully understand the concepts of breadcrumbing and ghosting that currently navigate in the modern dating world.

CHAPTER 7. LIMITATIONS

7. LIMITATIONS

This study has certain limitations that needs to be addressed. First, the sample size was too small, mostly consisting of females, as the representative of the population. The study has very few male subjects. Second, too little diversity was present among the participants of the study. Third, the population was mostly a representation of university students. Fourth, the study has a cross-sectional design with self-report measures. Hence, it lacks the accuracy of the information provided by the participants, therefore, affecting the study. Again, the study has addressed only one side of the story of the participants, and lacked the view point of their partners involved. Furthermore, the data collected for the study, mostly focused on ghosting and breadcrumbing in the context of romantic relationships. Therefore, future studies will need to consider these factors to close the gap in the results of the study.

CHAPTER 8. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPES

8. IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPES

The behaviours of ghosting and breadcrumbing may not be too uncommon to the present dating scenario around the world; it surely lacks definitive researches about these relationship experiences. The current study aimed to explore whether attachment styles and loneliness were affecting such behaviours. Due to lack of the association between attachment style and loneliness, more research needs to be done to see proper findings. A bigger sample, with a good representative of the population needs to considered for the future studies. Again, participants younger than 18 years and older than 30 years needs to be included in future studies, as they may also express such behaviours. Future research should collect a detailed data about such dating or relationship styles and the type of relationships ended by ghosting or maintained by breadcrumbing. Improvements in methods can also yield more accurate results in the future.

Ghosting and breadcrumbing can go hand in hand with negative emotions and poor social outcomes and can make it difficult for one to establish a proper and stable relationship in the future. This study only analyzed the relation between ghosting and breadcrumbing with three correlates (avoidant attachment style, anxious attachment style and loneliness). Future research can address mental health related variables; prevention of ghosting and breadcrumbing behaviours. Awareness can be spread about carefully using of the dating apps and those who utilize these apps are more prone to fall victims of ghosting and breadcrumbing.

Mental health professionals must be aware of such manipulative and maladaptive behaviours and their impact on individual's health and well-being. They can further help the clients experiencing or engaging in behaviours of ghosting and breadcrumbing, through counselling and psychoeducation. It can also help the counsellors who practice relationship and couples counselling. Again, taking interviews on accounts of the perpetrators as well as victims of ghosting and breadcrumbing can help in finding ways to prevent such actions and aware people in the future and educate people about such behaviours, in India. Lastly, developing strategies and resources who have encountered ghosting and breadcrumbing in relationships, can make the dating world a little safe.

CHAPTER 9. REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Aziz, S., Chaudhary, A., & Ali, N. (2021). To study the relationship satisfaction and degree of loneliness in romantic relationships. Indian Journal of Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy Print-(ISSN 0973-5666) and Electronic–(ISSN 0973-5674), 15(4), 109-119

Blalock, D. V., Franzese, A. T., Machell, K. A., & Strauman, T. J. (2015). Attachment style and self-regulation: How our patterns in relationships reflect broader motivational styles. Personality and Individual Differences, 87, 90-98.

Beeney, J. E., Stepp, S. D., Hallquist, M. N., Ringwald, W. R., Wright, A. G., Lazarus, S. A., ... & Pilkonis, P. A. (2019). Attachment styles, social behavior, and personality functioning in romantic relationships. Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment, 10(3), 275.

Biolcati, R., Pupi, V., & Mancini, G. (2021). Cyber dating abuse and ghosting behaviours: Personality and gender roles in romantic relationships. Current issues in personality psychology, 10(3), 240.

Buecker, S., Mund, M., Chwastek, S., Sostmann, M., & Luhmann, M. (2021). Is loneliness in emerging adults increasing over time? A preregistered cross-temporal meta-analysis and systematic review. Psychological Bulletin, 147(8), 787

Čopková, R., & Lörincová, E. (2021). The dark triad, love components, and attachment styles in romantic relationship experiencing during young adulthood. Interpersona: An International Journal on Personal Relationships, 15(2), 212-232.

Canziani, T. (2024). Dating Lexicon in the Digital Era: New Names for Toxic'Relationships

Çerkez, Y. (2017). The effect of attachment styles on perfectionism in romantic relationships. Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, 13(10), 6923-6931.

Cobzeanu, A., & Măirean, C. (2025). Online Fairytales: Breadcrumbing and Ghosting Behavior Among Young Adults. Deviant Behavior, 1-20.

Freedman, G., Powell, D. N., Le, B., & Williams, K. D. (2019). Ghosting and destiny: Implicit theories of relationships predict beliefs about ghosting. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 36(3), 905-924.

Freedman, G., Powell, D. N., Le, B., & Williams, K. D. (2024). Emotional experiences of ghosting. The Journal of social psychology, 164(3), 367-386.

González-Ortega, E., Orgaz-Baz, B., Vicario-Molina, I., & Fuertes-Martín, A. (2020). Adult attachment style combination, conflict resolution and relationship quality among young-adult couples. Terapia psicológica, 38(3), 303-316

Herrera-López, M., Coral-Lagos, A., Enriquez, M., & Herrera-Solarte, L. (2024). Psychometric properties of the RG-C Romantic Ghosting Scale: an instrumental study in a Colombian sample. Psychology, Society & Education, 16(1), 28.

Jalilian, K., Momeni, K., & Jebraeili, H. (2023). The mediating role of early maladaptive schemas in the relationship between attachment styles and loneliness. BMC psychology, 11(1), 136.

Kay, C., & Courtice, E. L. (2022). An empirical, accessible definition of "ghosting" as a relationship dissolution method. Personal Relationships, 29(2), 386-411.

Kaur, M. (2021). Mental Health and Loneliness During Covid-19. The International Journal of Indian Psychology.

Lad, B., & Mansukhani, S. (2023). A CORRELATIONAL STUDY BETWEEN DASS SCALES AND ATTACHMENT STYLES IN GHOSTED INDIAN ADULTS. Karnavati Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies, 1(2), 64-82.

Leavitt, C. E., Price, A. A., Inman, N. F., Lee, M., Sandridge, A., Harrison, Z., ... & Holmes, E. K. (2025). Loneliness Within a Romantic Relationship: Do Gratitude and Forgiveness Moderate Between Loneliness and Relational and Sexual Well-Being?. Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 1-14.

Monteoliva, A., García–Martínez, J. M. A., & Calvo–Salguero, A. (2016). Perceived benefits and costs of romantic relationships for young people: Differences by adult attachment style. The Journal of Psychology, 150(8), 931-948.

Mohan, M., & Mathew, A. M. (2024). Adult Attachment Styles, Fear of Intimacy and Relationship Satisfaction among Indian Young Adults. Indian Journal of Positive Psychology, 15(2), 153-158.

Mund, M., Weidmann, R., Wrzus, C., Johnson, M. D., Bühler, J. L., Burriss, R. P., ... & Grob, A. (2022). Loneliness is associated with the subjective evaluation of but not daily

dynamics in partner relationships. International Journal of Behavioral Development, 46(1), 28-38.

Navarro, R., Larrañaga, E., Yubero, S., & Víllora, B. (2020). Psychological correlates of ghosting and breadcrumbing experiences: A preliminary study among adults. International journal of environmental research and public health, 17(3), 1116.

Navarro, R., Larrañaga, E., Yubero, S., & Villora, B. (2020). Ghosting and breadcrumbing: Prevalence and association with online dating behavior among young adults. Escritos de Psicología-Psychological Writings, 13(2), 46-59.

Navarro, R., Larrañaga, E., Yubero, S., & Víllora, B. (2021). Individual, interpersonal and relationship factors associated with ghosting intention and behaviors in adult relationships: Examining the associations over and above being a recipient of ghosting. Telematics and informatics, 57, 101513.

Nikitin, J., Selovin, F., & Rupprecht, F. (2023). QUALITY OF DAILY ACTIVITIES AND LONELINESS IN A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP. Innovation in Aging, 7(Suppl 1), 430.

Olivas, R. N., Rubio, E. L., Jiménez, S. Y., & Galindo, B. V. (2020). Ghosting and breadcrumbing: prevalence and association with online dating behavior among young adults. Escritos de psicología, 13(2), 46-59.

Powell, D. N., Freedman, G., Le, B., & Williams, K. D. (2022). Exploring individuals' descriptive and injunctive norms of ghosting. Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace, 16(3).

Pancani, L., Aureli, N., & Riva, P. (2022). Relationship dissolution strategies: Comparing the psychological consequences of ghosting, orbiting, and rejection. Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace, 16(2).

Prasertwit, P. (2019). The relationship among level of intimacy, romantic attachment, coping strategies, and negative emotional experiences in young adults with ghosting experience.

Pereira, M. G., Taysi, E., Fincham, F. D., & Machado, J. C. (2015). Communication, relationship satisfaction, attachment and physical/psychological symptoms: the mediating role of loneliness. Online Brazilian Journal of Nursing, 14(3), 1-25.

Park, Y., & Klein, N. (2024). Ghosting: Social rejection without explanation, but not without care. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 153(7), 1765–1789.

Rodríguez-García, M. C., Márquez-Hernández, V. V., Granados-Gámez, G., Aguilera-Manrique, G., Martínez-Puertas, H., & Gutiérrez-Puertas, L. (2020). Development and validation of breadcrumbing in affective-sexual relationships (BREAD-ASR) questionnaire: introducing a New Online dating perpetration. International journal of environmental research and public health, 17(24), 9548.

Sulymka, S. I. (2022). What makes a ghoster? (Doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Arts, University of Regina).

Singh, H. (2024). Rewriting Romance: The Psychological and Cultural Implications of Gen Z's Relationship Slang. Indian Journal of Health & Wellbeing, 15(4).

Simpson, J.A., Rholes, W.S., and Phillips, D. (1996). Conflict in close relationships: An attachment perspective. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71, 899-914.

Sagone, E., Commodari, E., Indiana, M. L., & La Rosa, V. L. (2023). Exploring the association between attachment style, psychological well-being, and relationship status in young adults and adults—A cross-sectional study. European journal of investigation in health, psychology and education, 13(3), 525-539.

Swapnil, S., & Sahai, A. (2021). Effect of loneliness on attachment styles in young adults during pandemic. Journal of Indian Psychology, 9(3).

Thakkar, D., Haria, N., & Kumar, V. (2016). A study on the relationship between attachment styles, self esteem and loneliness amongst adolescents. Indian Journal of Mental Health, 3(2), 185-191.

Umemura, T., Lacinová, L., Kotrčová, K., & Fraley, R. C. (2018). Similarities and differences regarding changes in attachment preferences and attachment styles in relation to romantic relationship length: longitudinal and concurrent analyses. Attachment & human development, 20(2), 135-159.

Wu, K., & Bamishigbin, O. (2024). Ignorance is not always bliss: A qualitative study of young Adults' experiences with being ghosted. Personal Relationships, 31(2), 445-469.

Willis, M. L., Oliver, E., & March, E. (2023). Dating in the dark: Vulnerable narcissism predicts inauthentic self-presentation in online dating. Telematics and Informatics, 81, 101985.

Williams, Zachary & Himelstein, Robyn & Schiltz, Hillary & Gotham, Katherine. (2023). Scale of Loneliness (SoLo). 10.13140/RG.2.2.34985.98406.

Yap, M. A., Francisco, A. M., & Gopez, C. (2021). From best friends to silent ends: Exploring the concepts of ghosting in non-romantic relationships. International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research, 2(10), 943-950.

CHAPTER 10. APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Researcher Details : Final Year Student of MSc in Applied Psychology (Semester 4)

Sreemayee Das

Supervisor : Ms. Debangana Bhattacharya (Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Sister Nivedita University, Kolkata)

Institutional Contact : Sister Nivedita University, Newtown, West Bengal.

Hello, you are invited to participate in a study being conducted by Sreemayee Das, a post graduate student of Applied Psychology at Sister Nivedita University, Kolkata. Participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to participate, I will explain this study to you.

First you need to fill 4 questionnaires, and it will take around half an hour. You may find some questions to cause some emotional discomfort, but this information will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Your name will not be revealed anywhere, and except me, no one will ne able to see your information or even know whether you have participated in this study or not. When the study is completed and data has been analyzed, the list linking the participants to the study will be destroyed. I would remain obliged if you provide data with honesty. Your honest participation will help in making this research successful. If you have any doubts or queries, feel free to ask. Thank You for your participation and cooperation.

Participant's Statement :

"All of my questions and concerns about this study have been addressed, I choose to participate in this research project. I certify that I above 18 years of age."

Signature of the Participant: **Date :**

Signature of the Researcher: **Date :**

APPENDIX II

INFORMATION SCHEDULE

- NAME (initials only) –
- AGE –
- SEX – MALE / FEMALE / OTHERS
- RESIDENTIAL AREA – URBAN / SUBURBAN / RURAL
- MOTHER TONGUE –
- EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION –
- EMPLOYMENT STATUS – EMPLOYED / UNEMPLOYED
- RELATIONSHIP STATUS – MARRIED / UMNARRIED / SINGLE / IN A RELATIONSHIP
- LIVING WITH - BOTH PARENTS / SINGLE PARENT
- FAMILY TYPE – NUCLEAR / JOINT / EXTENDED
- FAMILY INCOME (PM) : < 30,000 / 30,000-50,000 / 50,000-100000 / > 1 Lakh
- MOTHER'S EDUCATION –
- MOTHER'S OCCUPATION –
- FATHER'S EDUCATION –
- FATHER'S OCCUPATION –

- DO YOU HAVE ANY HISTORY OF PHYSICAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL ILLNESS?

IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY :

- DO YOU HAVE ANY HISTORY OF SIGNIFICANT BRAIN INJURY?

IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY :

- DO YOU HAVE ANY SIGNIFICANT HISTORY OF SUBSTANCE DEPENDENCY?

IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY :

APPENDIX III **INSTRUCTIONS :**

Please answer all the questions carefully. While answering remember how you typically feel toward romantic (dating) partners in general. Keep that in mind there are no right or wrong answers. It is a 7 Point scale, give score 1 if you Strongly Disagree and 7 if you Strongly Agree.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

I Strongly Disagree I Strongly agree

No.	Question	Score
1	I find it relatively easy to get close to others.	
2	I am not very comfortable having to depend on other people.	
3	I am comfortable having others depend on me.	
4	I rarely worry about being abandoned by others.	
5	I do not like people getting too close to me.	
6	I am somewhat uncomfortable being too close to others.	
7	I find it difficult to trust others completely.	
8	I am nervous whenever anyone gets too close to me.	
9	Others often want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.	
10	Others often are reluctant to get as close as I would like.	
11	I often worry that my partner(s) do not really love me.	
12	I rarely worry about my partner(s) leaving me.	
13	I often want to merge completely with others, and this desire sometimes scares them away	
14	I am confident others would never hurt me by suddenly ending our relationship.	
15	I usually want more closeness and intimacy than others do.	
16	The thought of being left by others rarely enters my mind.	
17	I am confident that my partner(s) love me just as much as I love them.	

APPENDIX IV

INSTRUCTIONS :

Please answers the following questions. Fill the box with the response that best suits your situation. It is a 5 Point Scale where :

(1 = NEVER, 2 = HARDLY EVER, 3 = SOMETIMES, 4 = VERY OFTEN, 5 = ALWAYS)

QUESTIONS :	**SCORE**
1) When my partner expresses his feelings, I feel uncomfortable and try to end the conversation.	
2) My boyfriend/girlfriend is the reason I have incongruous behavior.	
3) I make my partner feel hopeful that I want a relationship together to excite him/her.	
4) Communication with my partner depends on my interest and availability.	
5) I feel the need to have someone by my side who cares about me.	
6) I feel nervous or uncomfortable when my partner proposes future plans.	
7) I avoid talking with my partner about future plans.	

8) I avoid being in person with my partner.	
9) When I talk with my partner about our future, my answers are unspecific.	
10) I contact my partner when I feel alone.	
11) I communicate with my partner to increase my self-esteem.	
12) I can spend weeks without communicating with my partner.	
13) When my partner contacts me I ignore their messages.	
14) I avoid talking about feelings with my partner.	
15) I always look for an excuse when my partner wants to deepen the relationship.	
16) Most of the interaction with my partner is through social networks.	

APPENDIX V

INSTRUCTIONS :

The following statements are related to breakups in relationships or other people you know who you may have a romantic interest in, through ICT (applications, social networks, etc.) Please reply according to your experiences in the context of romantic interest and relationships.

You should answer the first 9 statements with two responses each, based on the following questions:

(1) How often do/did you use the following behavior or action?

YOU use it against him/her (I have used it): includes actions you have used, use or would use against others.

(2) How often do/did they use the following behavior or action against you?

HE/SHE uses it against you (They have used it against me): includes actions that others have used against you.

Mark or write the number you think is most suitable in the situations given.

Item Each statement should be given two answers - please reply to both.		Response options				
		1. Never / Not at all	2. Hardly ever / On few occasions	3. Sometimes / Maybe	4. Nearly always / I probably would	5. Always/ I definitely would
1. Not answering calls or messages on WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Tinder or any other app, without giving explanations, perhaps in order to end a relationship or romantic interest.	HE/SHE uses it against you YOU use it against him/her					
2. Blocking social networks or apps without giving any explanation, in order to end a relationship or possible romantic interest	HE/SHE uses it against you YOU use it against him/her					
3. Gradually withdrawing contact or reducing messages sent on social networks or electronic media, until communication is totally stopped and the relationship or possible relationship therefore ends, without giving any explanation.	HE/SHE uses it against you YOU use it against him/her					
4. Using excuses to avoid responding to messages or continuing the communication, with the aim of ending a relationship without giving any explanations.	HE/SHE uses it against you YOU use it against him/her					
5. Blocking the phone number or social networks to avoid communication with a person you have or had a romantic interest in.	HE/SHE uses it against you YOU use it against him/her					
7. Blocking social networks, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, or another app, (if the application allows it) so that the partner, or potential partner, cannot contact you again.	HE/SHE uses it against you YOU use it against him/her					
8. Cutting off or stopping all communication without giving explanations, as a normal way to end a relationship or possible romantic relationship.	HE/SHE uses it against you YOU use it against him/her					
9. Showing interest in meeting someone and then quickly losing interest, so you stop answering messages, calls or chats.	HE/SHE uses it against you YOU use it against him/her					
10. Terminating the communication over the internet instead of explaining the real reasons face to face	HE/SHE uses it against you YOU use it against him/her					

Item	Response options				
Emotional Impact	1. Never / Not at all	2. Hardly ever / On few occasions	3. Sometimes / Maybe	4. Nearly always / I probably would	5. Always/ I definitely would
11. I feel sad when someone I am romantically interested in avoids my calls and ignores me on social media without giving me an explanation.					
12. I get angry if my partner, or potential partner, stops communicating with me.					
13. I get angry when my partner, or potential partner, doesn't respond to my messages or ignores me on social media					
14. I get angry when my partner or potential partner blocks me from social networks without giving me an explanation.					
15. I feel confused if my partner, or potential partner, never contacts me again.					
18. I feel it may be my fault when my partner, or love interest, blocks me from social media without explanation and ends all communication.					